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THE ART BENEATH THE UNIFORM.

J. Glenelg Grant.



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THE HEART
BENEATH THE UNIFORM



QUARTERMASTER-SERGEANT JOHN BURNETT COWNIE.

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Children

THE HEART BENEATH THE UNIFORM

BY
J. GLENELG GRANT

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TO
MY BROTHER-IN-LAW
SIDNEY ROBINSON, M.P.
PRESIDENT OF
THE CARDIFF SAILORS' AND SOLDIERS' RESTS

FOREWORD

“**Y**OU should write a book,” friends have frequently said to me as, on visiting our Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Rests, they have listened to incidents of tragedy, pathos, or humour concerning service men who have at some time or other been our guests.

The poet has said that “fields have eyes.” If this be true of walls also, then those at the Rest must often blink in astonishment at the scenes they witness. Sometimes it is men who, after travelling for days, arrive straight from the trenches, mud-bespattered and carrying their rifle and kit. Another time it is the blue uniform of the hospital patient which dominates the scene as, seated around the small tables, the men laugh and chat over the free refreshments offered them at any hour of the day. Often of

an evening every inch of space is occupied by garrison and other service men who crowd the concert-room, listening with manifest delight to the high-class music provided, thus witnessing that what they most prize is an entertainment totally free from the banalities of the music-hall.

There are also many beneficent activities without the walls which touch the life of the soldier in barrack, camp, and hospital.

The doors of the Rest are never closed. All night long voluntary workers meet the trains and invite the constant stream of khaki-clad men and stalwart bluejackets who have occasion to break their journey at Cardiff, to come and partake of refreshments and, when required, dormitory accommodation, both of which are provided quite free of cost. About thirteen hundred men weekly have availed themselves of our night hospitality since the early days of the war, and there is a very much larger number of visitors by day; indeed the Rest has been likened to a human kaleidoscope, so ever varying are its scenes and activities.

What wonderful opportunities for conversation these nights and days have afforded! What

stories of adventure, experience, joy, and suffering have been related ! It is difficult to write a book when more than a million men have passed through the doors ; difficult to know, not what to say but what to leave unsaid.

Most of the incidents in the following chapters have happened during the Great War, but some are recalled from long ago, for I have worked among service men for more than twenty years. No fiction is so thrilling as a real story—nothing so worth while spending one's time and energy upon as the endeavour to help one's brothers, especially those who are bearing the burden and heat of the day in this terrible conflict.

The lessons learnt from the pages of the human heart are often ones of romance and delight. I have written in the hope that these stories may, perchance, awaken in some reader, who has hitherto been a stranger to the joy of service, the desire to labour in the world's great field already white unto harvest.

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THE HEART BENEATH THE UNIFORM

CHAPTER I

JOCK: A SKETCH

I. A BOY'S WILL

"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

HE flung himself across the table and sobbed as though his little heart would break. The other motherless children were crying too, but in a subdued, wondering way. John's passionate grief seemed to frighten them.

Poor boy, he was only ten, but already his waywardness had brought him into conflict with his father and his teachers, with everyone, indeed, except with her who lay dead in an adjoining room. It was only mother who had never called him naughty; it was only mother who understood! There was one—his mother's sister—

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who witnessed this outburst of sorrow; it revealed to her a depth of feeling which hitherto she had not suspected, and aroused within her a yearning tenderness which always followed him. Eleven years later, writing from the Transvaal to his father, John says of her: "You know she is my favourite aunt, and seemed to understand me when others, not I fear without cause, used to call me a scamp."

It was not until he had enlisted in the army that I met John Burnett Cownie. For the record of the earlier incidents in his career I am indebted to the members of his family. His father, Mr. Francis Cownie, writing to me about John, says: "He was born in Edinburgh on 24th September 1886. As a child of six or seven years of age he would cause anxiety by disappearing for hours, returning home late and explaining that he had been calling upon various friends of the family. The people afterwards said that they were delighted to have a visit from him, because he was such an interesting boy. Notwithstanding his fondness for playing truant, his schoolmaster had a deep regard for John, and declared that he was a boy of brilliant promise; and on one occasion wrote: 'I believe that he will prove himself a brave, noble, and good man.'"

When only thirteen years old he was absolutely set on going to sea. His father told him that this was impossible until he had completed his schooling, but in spite of all reasoning he ran away from home, determined to become a sailor. The first day he walked to Gullane, a distance of nineteen miles. Here he made friends with a gentleman, with whom he stayed overnight, and then walked on some miles farther down the coast, to use his own words, "looking for a ship"; but through the kind offices of a lady who met him at East Linton, he was sent home again the following day.

For twelve weary months he settled down to work at school. Then once more he was possessed with an unquenchable longing for adventure, and he again disappeared from home. After several days had passed there came a letter from a gentleman in Ireland stating that, when travelling to Coleraine, he had found a boy hiding in the railway compartment without ticket or money. It proved to be John Cownie, who, after spending two or three days in Belfast, resolved to travel further in quest of a ship that would "take him to America." He had come to the end of his slender resources two days previously, and since then had had nothing to eat. His frank and engaging manner completely won

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the goodwill of this gentleman, who gave him food and money, and who entrusted him to the care of the police of Moville, pending instructions from the boy's home. The head constable showed great solicitude for John's welfare, and wrote to his father: "I am sending him to Glasgow, where the chief officer of the ship will put him into the train for Edinburgh. I hope the child will see the folly of running away from home to go to sea. 'We could not but pity him.'"

In John's nature there certainly was

"The thirst to know and understand,
A large and liberal discontent."

He longed for ampler opportunities of learning than those afforded within school walls. After a further period of steady application to his books the lad again broke loose, and this time he wrote from Copenhagen, informing his family that he had reached there in the steamship *Thorsa*. On her return to Leith his father anxiously hastened to the vessel and found the boy on board. The captain explained that on the outward passage, twelve hours after sailing, a young stowaway came out of his hiding-place and appeared on deck. It was John, who, advancing to the captain and touching his cap, said politely, "I have run away from home to go to sea." The captain added that he im-

mediately took a great fancy to the youngster and would like to keep him. It was deemed wise to allow him to remain on the *Thorsa* for a short while, and later he became an apprentice in a well-known shipping line, as he would not heed his father's entreaties to stay on shore and qualify for a profession. Being bound as an apprentice, however, was not a tie sufficiently strong to hold in check the wayward lad, and he deserted his ship.

John was always deeply attached to his father, and wrote him several hundred letters in all. Fortunately, these were kept by Mr. Cownie, and he has most kindly placed them at my disposal. They give a wonderful insight into the character and experiences of their writer. The extracts from some of them, given in the following pages, tell their own story.

II. LETTERS

"I tried to write you such a letter
As would tell you all my heart to-day."

SCHOONER "VISTULA," SWANSEA,
October 6, 1902.

"I am sorry that I have not written for some time. I do not know how it is, but I cannot

stay long in any ship. I get on well enough, but I continually want to be on the move. I cleared out of my last ship in Genoa, and left my discharges, clothes, and £2 and a few shillings on her. After hanging about for a week or so, sleeping anywhere and getting a bit of bread from the English Consul, I got a passage to Swansea in a steamship, called the *Oakdale*, of London. It took us twelve days to go home. On the passage I made the acquaintance of a boy who had been in hospital for six weeks with a broken wrist. He fell down the hold of a large London steamship. We agreed that if he did not like the sea we would both go out to America, and try our luck there.

“When I got to Swansea I went to the Church Army Labour Home, where I had to break sticks for a living. Last Friday-week I was at a Harvest Thanksgiving Service, the sermon being the Parable of the Sower. I think I am like the seed that fell on the stony ground, that sprung up, but as soon as the hot sun of temptation came, it withered away. If I am a bad, wicked, good-for-nothing boy, it is not for want of trying to be good, or that I do not want to be good. I often think that is what makes me wander, ever trying to find peace and happiness and love, which, when they were mine, I threw to the winds. I used to think I would be happier when I had money,

but now I know that money cannot buy happiness. If I had had enough clothes I could have gone as a boy to look after a pony and trap, and done odd jobs at an hotel in Neath, a place not far from here. I should be only too glad to get a job ashore anywhere, bar Edinburgh. I am too proud to return there after running away."

BARRY, GLAM.,
October 18, 1902.

"In my last letter I told you I was going to join a new ship. However, I did not go in her; instead I started to walk to Barry, a place forty miles from Swansea. I walked ten miles that day; my boots were a size and a half too small for me, and my feet were all blistered. That night I stayed in a place called Port Talbot. Next day I started on my thirty-mile tramp to Barry. First of all I cut the toes off my boots. After walking about ten miles my feet got worse, so I took my boots off and threw them away. After that my feet were easier; it was a terrible tramp up hill and down dale, smooth, muddy roads, and rough, stony ones. All I had to eat was blackberries, and I drank water out of the mud puddles in the road.

"In the evening I got into Barry, where I went to a Sailors' Mission Room. They were singing

hymns, but towards the end of the first I felt myself getting dizzy, and my head got as hot as fire. When I sat down, I fainted and fell on the floor. They sprinkled water on my head and fanned me with a hymn sheet, and I came to. After that it was a bit of alright. I drank four cups of tea, but for the first time in my life I could not eat. Shelter was provided for me that night. The next morning my feet were a mass of blisters. I got a pair of stockings, but as yet my wearing boots is out of the question. I will write more to-morrow."

EAST CAMP, PRETORIA, S. AFRICA,
July 26, 1903.

"It is now nearly eight months since I wrote to you. I expect you will have concluded that I enlisted, which is what I have done. I can assure you I am very sorry for all the trouble I have given you. I am now trying to lead a straightforward, God-fearing life. I do not know whether you are dead or alive, but I hope you may live to hear this good news. I have done eight months' service, and I like the army very much, and the N.C.O.s of my company are very decent fellows. I am in the Welsh Regiment, which is stationed in East Camp, Pretoria, Transvaal, South Africa. My address is : Private John Cownie, No. 77II,

1st Welsh Regiment. I cannot find any more to tell you, though I ought to have tons to say."

PRETORIA, *September 18, 1903.*

"I was so glad to get your letter. Last night we had an awful storm; what with snow, rain, wind, and thunder and lightning, it was a terrible time. I am going to attend an army school. You want to know what made me determine to serve God. I enlisted in Cardiff on the 25th November 1902. I used to go to a Soldiers' and Sailors' Rest there, where I spent some very happy evenings. It was then I first thought of living seriously. Nobody can be happy in sin, and I was really miserable in it. Have you ever had to run from a room so that your comrades should not see those hot bitter tears which *must* come? I had been looking for a hiding-place and, thank God, I found one—it is in 'the Rock of Ages.'

"We had very jolly times in Cardiff. On Christmas evening I went to the Rest, where we had a proper Christmas party. Mr. Grant, who is head of the work there, offered to mesmerise any of us. Of course I was amongst the number who volunteered. He made us stand in a row, and gave each of us a plate to hold, which, unknown to us, was covered with soot underneath.

By a trick he got us to blacken our own faces without realising what we were doing, until all the chaps in the room began shouting with laughter at us; and then we were given a mirror, and saw what the mesmerism had done for us! I left Cardiff for Devonport in January, and, later, we came to South Africa. The army is not such a very bad place if you try to like it."

PRETORIA, *October 11, 1903.*

"I am on guard to-night, so I have taken this opportunity of writing to you. I went up to see my commanding officer about my age. Nobody can enlist under eighteen, and I was only sixteen years old when I joined. As I am now serving God I could not go on living a lie, but the officer thought that it was all nonsense, and added, 'You enlist under age, and when you find the work too hard you try to get out of it.' I said I was trying to get out of nothing, and was quite contented. Afterwards I was sent for and told that no more would be said about it. This was a bit of luck, for they could have put me on boy's pay and made me stay on for seven years."

QUETTA, BALUCHISTAN,
May 8, 1905.

"When I leave the army I want to go in for the

ministry, and although I tell myself over and over again that I could not pass the exams, I won't believe it. There are many ladies in our Soldiers' Homes here who have given up all the comforts of the homeland just for the sake of helping soldiers to live good lives. Thank God there are several Christians in the Quetta garrison, and oh, Daddy, pray to God to keep us all true, for there are a great many temptations to go wrong."

QUETTA, *February 12, 1906.*

"As to my becoming a chaplain, I can only ask God to guide me in the matter. Perhaps after all it is not His will that I should be one, for He may have other work for me to do. What does it matter where or what I am, God is with me, and work there always is; it is the workers who are scarce! To a certain extent I am handicapped in trying to educate myself, for a barrack-room is by no means an ideal study."

2ND WELSH REGIMENT, QUETTA,

June 16, 1906.

"I could not think of doing anything unless I felt it to be God's will. I believe He sent me away from home influences out to India that I might be strengthened; here I have to rely on Him at all times. Surrounded by men who

read me instead of reading their Bibles, I have to lead a more consistent life than I might have done at home.

"The weather is fearfully hot ; I tried to read a book this afternoon, but had to give it up. It is now, as I write, 9 p.m., and the heat is terrible. I think I had better close. I am almost falling asleep with my pen in my hand."

MIDDELBURG, TRANSVAAL,
November 11, 1906.

"We had a very nice voyage from Karachi to Durban. I was rather glad that I was posted to this company. It has the name of being the worst in the regiment. Everybody told me I would have to stop 'Bible-punching' when I joined it. It was a struggle to kneel down by my cot amongst strangers, but I have always the knowledge, which again I proved, that God is able to supply all our need. As I was coming back from the recreation-room, where I had been spending the evening, the first night we were here, I met a drunken man who had known me for a long time. 'What ho, Jock boy,' he said in derision, 'still looking up?' Of course I made no reply. I felt nettled at what he said, but I went straight to my room, and then and there I got the victory."

MIDDELBURG, *May 27, 1907.*

"I have just been told that I am in for a week's sport. We start next Wednesday, and are taking no transport, so that means we shall have to buy everything required, fodder for the horses included. Of course we shall get an allowance for all. The first two days we go to a farm about fifty miles inland. We are wanted there to shoot baboons. It appears that there are so many of them that they are becoming a pest. I believe two days will suffice to drive them out of the neighbourhood, and then we go off in twos shifting for ourselves. It ought to prove very enjoyable."

Written on his 21st Birthday.

MIDDELBURG, *September 24, 1907.*

"I was very pleased to receive your letter of congratulation, not to mention your Post Office order. I have not yet determined what to buy with it. Now that I am 21, I begin to ask myself what sort of a man am I, and the answer does not come as easily as the question. I shall be satisfied if, at the end of it, it may be said of me, as Mark Antony said of Brutus, 'Nature might stand up and say to all the world, This was a man!' Perhaps after all the man who ends up

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best is he who does what he can, striving at one small thing until he attains it, and then goes on to another. I have often thought it hard to decide what I shall do in the future, but now I know that I must just do the things which come my way."

5TH REGIMENT MOUNTED INFANTRY,
STANDERTON, TRANSVAAL,
December 27, 1907.

"So Christmas has come and gone again, another year has passed, one more span of the bridge of life crossed. I am thankful that I still long to be one of God's best servants."

STANDERTON, *March 1, 1908.*

"I have been appointed school assistant in the Garrison school. I felt inclined to laugh when I was asked to take it, for now I shall have as much to unlearn as I have to learn. I like it all right, and have a very small class of chicks, but quite enough. Another lot would drive me mad. They are very wild ; at times they make me feel inclined to beat them. Of course this I am not allowed to do ; it is the privilege of the headmaster. There is one youngster who says jokes with such a wicked grin that, instead of checking him, I have to join in the laughter.

"We have just finished our annual course of musketry. I managed to get first-class shot."

STANDERTON, *March 29, 1908.*

"I want to speak to you on a fairly serious matter. Though I love the army, what am I going to do for a livelihood? I am not in love with the service, still I am by no means uncomfortable or unhappy in it. It is possible I may get a commission, and this is something to aim at, but a commission without money to keep it up is not at all a thing to be envied. I have known more than one officer sell out with a heavy heart owing to lack of funds. Give me your opinion."

STANDERTON, *April 13, 1908.*

"I have been getting on fairly well with my teaching at school. I am obliged to learn a lot, so that I may tell the children more than their books can teach them. I have been thinking over my last letter, and I feel that India is the country to which I ought to go. The thought of home is a great temptation to me, for I should like to see you all again, and to feel once more my native land beneath my feet."

STANDERTON, *September 28, 1908.*

"A wire came, through the Captain, to promote

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me Corporal, and you can imagine my feelings when I say I thought my heart was coming through my coat. I have jumped twenty of my one-time seniors, and gained a good year's seniority. The Captain told me afterwards that it was entirely on my own merits that I had been promoted."

STANDERTON, *October 10, 1908.*

"A lady worker I met at one of the Soldiers' Homes in India wrote to me saying that she thought I should do best in the army, and in a way I think so too. At the same time, if I could only believe myself worthy, and could get a chance of some foreign or home missionary work, I should most certainly take it. I have a very hard struggle at times to keep straight, but I love the Christ who died for me, and He gives me the victory. I know I am not what I ought to be, but I ask God to help me and make me more worthy of Him."

STANDERTON, *November 15, 1908.*

"I have not yet ceased to like the thought that those I love are thinking of me. In your last letter you spoke of a 'Church Building Fund.' It will give me the greatest pleasure to send my little bit in aid of it. Of course I cannot promise to give much in the next five years, for I have no

idea what my income will be, but I can and will promise to give as much as I am able. At present I send my tithe to the Rescue Society. When I first came to realise that all the money I received came from God, I was rather perplexed how to spend it. One day I picked up a list of charities and selected the Rescue Society. I believe the reason I chose it was because of the superscription on the badge, 'Neither do I condemn thee.' It is such a wonderfully full pardon. There are those who are inclined to blame these poor women without the second thought that some who are stronger than they led them into a life of sin.

"What I give to the Church will be over and above my tithe. I suppose a good deal of money will be required, not only for the building but for the site. I look forward to being in dear 'Auld Reekie' for Christmas 1909."

MIDDELBURG, *December 27, 1908.*

"So Christmas has come and gone! It must be eight or nine years since I spent one at home; still, I look forward to having the next one with you. I fear Christmas in the army is far too noisy, and there is too much drunkenness about; not because this is the soldier's only way of enjoying himself, but he has nowhere else to go except to the

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canteen, which is a very bad form of public-house. I say this because I have had seven Christmases in the army, and I know that most of the men would prefer to be out of barracks, if only they had a place to go to."

MIDDELBURG, *February 1, 1909.*

"I have made friends with a very nice person down here, but worse luck, he goes down to Bloemfontein in a few days' time. He is a Scripture reader to the 93rd Battery, R.F.A. Between us we hold two meetings weekly, but they are rather scantily attended; last night we had about six or seven."

MIDDELBURG, *February 22, 1909.*

"I shall be glad to get home, if only to spend a few hours in the old church; still, I have heard some excellent sermons out here, but the singing has been very inferior. Sometimes I think that tennis is more in demand than church. There is an awful lot of tennis here on Sundays."

2ND WELSH REGIMENT, BLOEMFONTEIN,
October 25, 1909.

"We leave for home on the 22nd February 1910. Until then we shall be very busy; still, when one looks ahead and sees the white cliffs at no very

great distance, work is a pleasure. I have travelled much in Pete's country, with its dried water-courses, steep and rugged. I have learned to like the man who fought and died bravely for his home, and now the British soldier is always sure of a hearty welcome at his farm. If your bag is bare and his half full, yours is not empty at parting. I have before now been thankful for a cup of hot coffee given in all good fellowship when the night was cold. Perhaps he is lazy; but then what is the use of working here when you benefit nothing by it? If he does live in a hut, half mud, half rough-hewn stone, it is what he has lived in all his life, and it is in good repair and clean. Moreover, railways are few and far apart, and roads not of the best, so that to build a substantial home would cost a pretty penny. I shall be sorry to leave him, sorry to think that the friendly chats of old times are over, that no more will he show me the best places for fishing, the best hillsides for buck. The black, too, is not a bad sort of customer if approached from the proper side. He is only nasty when made so. The Zulu especially is a fine big fellow, and a good one at heart."

THE WELSH REGIMENT, CARDIFF,

May 2, 1910.

"I have come to Cardiff. It has improved

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during the past eight years. I have to teach young soldiers to 'Fear God, honour the King, shoot straight, and keep clean,' to use the words of Kipling."

III. QUESTIONINGS

"I seem'd to feel His arms enfold me,

And yet was half afraid ;

And I said—

'Oh ! that I knew where I might find Him !' "

"May I bring a friend to our picnic this afternoon ?" asked a young non-commissioned officer who was one of our regular workers at the Rest. "He has recently returned from South Africa, and is one of the finest characters I have ever met."

"Of course you may," was the ready response.

For many years it has been customary to have frequent informal picnics for our workers. It was a lovely afternoon, and as we walked along the cliffs I found the visitor who had come amongst us by my side. The swaying corn, here and there splashed with crimson poppies, was bowing to the will of the gentle sea breeze, as though practising lessons of humility against the day when the reaper would lay it low. My companion was a powerfully-

built young man wearing the uniform of the Welsh Regiment, and I found him very easy to talk to. For the first few minutes he had seemed reserved, but his manner thawed, and, as we conversed, it dawned upon me that he was my young friend, John Cownie, whom I had not seen for eight years. He had been waiting for me to recognise him. Presently we reached a small bay shut in by cliffs, and here we found the rest of the picnic party.

Towards the close of the day, when the glowing colours of sunset were deepening into evening shadows, I stood alone looking out to sea. Suddenly turning I found Cownie for a second time beside me. We made our way to some rocks and sat down, while the waves broke at our feet. Night crept on, and there shone out, across the waste of waters, coloured lights from the passing vessels outward and homeward bound, and to both of us I believe there came surging into our hearts high yearnings

“ From the mystic ocean
Whose rim no foot hath trod,”

and I felt led to say, “ How often in life we are like ‘ ships that pass in the night ’ ; we draw near, hail one another, and then we are borne away, perchance never to meet again.” Feeling

constrained to speak of the things of eternity I asked him if his sails were set for the heavenly harbour, and was Christ his Pilot. After a brief silence he looked up at me, and said in tones of infinite pathos, " You have spoken of God loving me, but I have lately been wondering if that is true, why He let my mother die when I was only ten years old ? " For a minute I made no reply. Then I said, " When storms break over me and dark thoughts come, I look at Love's great Gift upon the Cross, and I know that God cares," and once more there was silence. The sound of returning footsteps warned us that a start for home must now be made, and all opportunity for intimate talk that day was ended.

During the whole of Cownie's stay in Cardiff at this period of his life, he was greatly perplexed about his future career, for the time was approaching when he would have to decide whether to leave the army or rejoin and become entitled to a pension. He was ambitious, and it was with bitter regret he looked back upon the opportunities for education and advancement which, when a boy, he had so lightly cast aside.

When at Middelburg in South Africa, he formed a friendship with a Presbyterian minister who mapped out a course of reading which John—

or Jock as his comrades always called him—carefully followed, and other friends helped him in his studies. He loved books, and had dreams of becoming a writer. In a letter to his father at this time he says: "I often feel that had I been educated when a boy instead of running about as I did, I might have made a fair author. Incidents fix themselves in my head, and plots spring up, but I am hampered by my vocabulary being so small. As a boy, I was a good storyteller—from two points of view perhaps. I am sending you some fiction which I have written; it is a story entitled 'Eleanor.' Dear obedient child, she goes to whichever editor I send her, but the mischief is that she has a nasty, spiteful way of always coming back; why won't they take her in? Yet I am very fond of her. I have another literary child, and this one too has contracted the same bad habit of wandering. Neither stay away for long, nobody wants them, although they don't require boots or clothes or school fees! The little wretches will not go anywhere unless I buy a penny photograph of the King and stick it on them." He lent me some of his stories to read, and they were just what one would expect from him—heroes and heroines who knew no limits to the sacrifices they made for others.

Jock possessed a truly altruistic spirit, but I have to confess that love of sport tempted him at times to turn poacher. On one occasion, when going through a course of firing at Penally in Pembrokeshire, he went out with another corporal rabbit shooting. The farmer suddenly surprised them, and there was a hot chase over hedge and ditch. When relating the story Jock merrily said, "The farmer seemed to have something very important to say to us, but we did not wish to hear it. Soldiers do not need to know everything."

Jock attended the Rest regularly ; he took no direct part in its work, but his life was exemplary and his high ideals were an inspiration to his comrades.

This is how he writes to his father at this period on an important subject : "Not being used to the society of ladies, I feel the most awkward thing in trousers in their company. During the past five years I have not spoken to more than ten of them. A few months ago, when saying good-bye in South Africa, I was left in company with three, and it is sufficient to say that I retired in hasty confusion. We are, as a whole, debarred from all civilian society except those we meet in the street—the man or woman who simply accepts you for your money's sake. Why

this should be I can't say, but it is so. The result is that many soldiers go with the stream and drift into immorality, and I am not surprised that they do. If the public realised the temptations with which soldiers are faced, they would not shut them out of their homes as they do. It has been a very hard struggle to keep clear of sin during these years. Most of the struggle is over now. I've lived through it and learned daily to hate it more, but there are boys here who have not, and although I believe I have influenced a few for good, the many, I fear, are laying up for themselves a hard future."

Although Jock still rang true and was absolutely fearless for the right, he admitted to me that he was not, as of old, living in the full consciousness and sunshine of Divine favour. He had need, like the Psalmist of old, to utter the cry, "Restore unto me the *joy* of Thy salvation." And he knew that this was my daily prayer for him.

There were times when Jock indulged in deep heart-searchings. I quote from a letter written at this period: "Sometimes we find that we have not thrown aside every weight, and although we have tried to run the race, we have not always run it with patience, 'looking unto Jesus, the

Author and Finisher of our faith.' For no matter how we try to run, if we neglect the latter part there are sure to be laps we might have run better, falls that would not have occurred. I once gave an address on this text. I wonder if, when writing this, Paul was thinking of the thorn in his flesh. He does not tell us what it was—very few people will."

About this time there was much public discussion regarding the possibility of war with Germany. "I hope that you will never be on a battlefield," remarked a friend to Jock, "because you are too good to be shot."

"Too good to be shot?" he replied laughingly. "Why, that is all I'm living for!"

Was it because the words were those of unconscious prophecy that they were heard with a sense of foreboding?

Many incidents in Jock's life have come to my knowledge which are worthy of record. His comrades all knew that it was his practice to pray daily before going on parade. Some of them told me that one morning he arrived late, and the officer demanded to know the reason. The effect was electrical when, before all, he quietly replied, "I was praying to my Master, Jesus Christ." Nothing further was said to him, and no notice taken of the breach of discipline,

for he had won not only the respect but the hearts of both officers and men.

On another occasion, when the men were about to fall in, an officer began to swear at them.

"Please, sir," said Jock, in respectful but firm tones, "you have no right to address the men like that."

"I am sorry, Cownie; I am in the wrong," came the magnanimous reply, and Jock had no truer friend in the days that followed than the officer whom he had rebuked.

One young soldier was without money to pay the train fare to visit his distant home. It was Jock who came to the rescue of the distressed lad by giving him a sovereign. I remember a sergeant telling me that, owing to his folly, he found himself without a suit of civilian clothes in which to visit his relations, so all thoughts of a family reunion were abandoned. "Jock somehow got to know of this," he added, "and came to ask me if I knew of anyone who would buy a suit of his for five shillings, as just then he wanted that sum of money. I at once saw that this was Jock's kindly way of practically giving me the clothes; he knew that my silly pride might stand in the way of accepting them as a gift out and out. I am ashamed to say I was not too proud to take advantage of his generosity, and gladly

closed with his offer, keeping up the absurd make-believe that it was a fair business transaction."

During the last evening I spent with Jock he was very quiet. We discussed future plans, and decided to meet at a date not far distant. But this was not to be, and I never saw him again. Writing to his father on 7th October 1912, he says: "This must be my last letter from Cardiff. On Wednesday next I leave here for Borden, there to join my regiment. I have made one or two real friends here, and I am sorry to think that our pleasant hours together are so soon to be denied us. I leave Cardiff with more regrets than I thought possible."

He often wrote to me from Borden, but I learnt more of his life there from his comrades than from his letters.

A fellow-sergeant about to get married was lamenting his lot in having to bring his young wife to a house with all their furniture still in packing-cases and boxes. "Let me undertake this for you," said Jock, who had overheard the remark. On reaching her new home, the bride was surprised and delighted to find everything in perfect order, with the piano in the right place and the pictures all hung. The bridegroom told me that the taste and judgment Jock had dis-

played was so sound that no alterations were necessary.

I have met many of the recruits who passed through his hands at this time. Woe betide the lad who appeared before him untidy or unkempt ! He was always very strict, and for such an offence there was swift retribution. When evening came, however, it was his common practice to invite those whom he had reprimanded while on duty to a good supper at his expense.

He was an enthusiastic temperance worker, and when in India had held high office in the ranks of Good Templary. Like most teetotallers he had a healthy appetite, and was not averse to a good dinner. The following letter bears this out, and also reveals the genuine good humour which was so characteristic of him: " Two of us planned never to complain of the amount of work we had done. We used to go into the mess trying hard to look fresh and happy, and talked of the glories of our present life, and how much we enjoyed things, until all the other fellows, filled with surprise, stopped eating, and held up their knives and forks in a very unmannerly way, through sheer amazement. One day we returned to barracks about 6 p.m., tired and hungry, but, being orderly sergeant, I had not been able to get away to look after the inner

man. When eventually I did reach the mess there was no dinner left, and, in honour bound not to complain, I quietly stated that 'it did not in the least matter, I never worried about such trifles as meat and potatoes,' and the chaps nearly all tumbled down with astonishment. Shortly afterwards I discreetly withdrew from the company and went off and had a good square meal elsewhere. It is truly said, 'The British soldier sees more dinner-times than dinners.' "

I have met at different times a very large number of men who knew Jock and served with him, and without exception they all bear tribute to the wonderful influence he exercised over others. His rule was one of absolute justice, but any severity that discipline demanded was always afterwards tempered by some kindly act. Numberless testimonies have come to me, but the nature of them all can be summed up in the words of one lad who said, "He was a lovely man."

Whilst at Borden the dark cloud, which for a time had shadowed his religious life, lifted, and once more he came into the full light and joy of earlier days. He described the change to me in the following words: "After months of misery I have again found peace. How different everything is! The world is rosy red! No longer is duty irksome, but pleasant. The day, though

still a day of toil, is relieved of its worst task—getting rid of my own terrible burden of thoughts, which drove me deeper and deeper into the blues. Thank you, my friend, for praying for me so long, even after the year you promised was up ; but pray still that I may grow stronger each day. I am glad to learn the good news from the Rest. I have always had an interest in its welfare, and now more so than ever.”

Another letter written shortly after this says : “ For a long time I have not been getting the best out of life. I could not understand what was the matter. It has dawned upon me that I have been asking God to help me in all sorts of ways ; and He has, but I did not enjoy His gifts because I was not trying to return them. What I require is work for Him and plenty of it, so I am offering to take a class of boys in Sunday school, and any other small jobs I can get. I am sure it will do me good, and help to make the coming mile on life’s road more beautiful.” He also gathered together some kindred spirits in the regiment, and inaugurated a small class for Bible study which met every other evening.

Just before the European conflagration broke out Jock was preparing to take a holiday. On 12th August 1914 he writes : “ But for the war I should now have been enjoying my holiday,

and I scarcely expected that it would be spent on the Continent. For the past ten days we have been hard at work getting ready to leave, and I am heartily glad that we are off at last. I am writing in the train on my way to Southampton and the front. In moments such as these, when I have time to think, I wonder what the future is going to be! Better, perhaps, not to wonder, but take it as it comes. You must excuse this scribble, for the train is rocking so much that writing is almost impossible."

IV. A CROWN OF LIFE

"My barque is wafted to the strand
By Love Divine:
And on the helm there rests a Hand
Other than mine.

Safe to the Land, safe to the Land,
The end is this:
And then with Him, go hand in hand,
Far into bliss."

Jock was always reticent about his achievements, and neither spoke nor wrote of them. For the record of what transpired at the front, I rely on the testimony of those who fought with him during the terrible days when Britain's "contemptible little army" foiled the

efforts of the German hordes in their advance towards Paris. Before the war, Jock one year held the record of being the best shot in his battalion, but now he won another distinction—the title of “the bravest man in the regiment.”

In the early days of the war our troops suffered greatly from the skilful sniping of the enemy. On his arrival at the front Jock at once undertook to become a sniper of snipers, and with wonderful success. It is practically certain that in a single day he accounted for six German snipers. He was constantly sacrificing his hours of rest to go out and track down his quarry, or, as he termed it, “visit his happy hunting-ground.” Day after day his practice was to start off lightly equipped with a rifle, bandolier containing fifty rounds, and field-glasses, and frequently he would remain away all night. A sergeant who had been his close friend for several years and was serving with him at the front, said that with Jock “sniping was a passion.” Amongst those whom he shot was a German who had won the Iron Cross. Sometimes he returned with watches and other valuables found on the bodies of those “whom he had accounted for,” and he took every care to ensure that steps were taken to return such property to the relations of the deceased men.

Not the least dangerous part of such expeditions

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was the chance of his identity being mistaken by his comrades when returning to his own lines in the dusk of the evening or the cold grey light of dawn.

"I had pointed my rifle at him and was just about to fire," said a soldier to me, "when my mate cried, 'For goodness' sake don't shoot! It's Jock.' And there he was, just creeping back after being out sniping all night."

One man referred to him in tones of deep gratitude, saying, "Jock went to look for a stretcher for me when I was wounded, and I am thankful he succeeded, though others had entirely failed."

Although it was not part of his duty, and he could have told off someone else to do it, Jock undertook the dangerous and difficult task of bringing up the ammunition. Or when the food ran short in the trenches and the men were suffering terribly from hunger, it was again he who accomplished the well-nigh impossible feat of procuring it for them.

On one occasion he discovered that a hayrick was being used by the enemy for observation purposes. Hazarding his life, he succeeded in reaching it and setting it on fire. The Germans inside were compelled to forsake their hiding-place, and, rushing out into the open, were quickly dealt with.

A ruse which the enemy sometimes adopted was to place the bodies of dead men in positions which made them appear living. By the early light one morning some soldiers were revealed lurking near the German lines. There was something uncanny and sinister in their motionless bearing, and it was Jock who first suspected a trap. With infinite skill and daring he crawled near enough to find that each rigid figure was a corpse, but close at hand were three German soldiers in hiding with a machine gun, ready to turn it upon any men advancing from the British lines. He surprised them and demanded their instant surrender. Completely taken aback, they offered no resistance, and Jock returned with them as prisoners.

The historical dispatch published by General Sir John French after the retreat from Mons contains the name of Quartermaster-Sergeant John Burnett Cownie, who for conspicuous bravery on the field is awarded the D.S.O., and recommended for a commission.

I at once sent my congratulations, but ere they reached him he had already been awarded the highest promotion, for "faithful unto death" he had received the "crown of life." My letter was returned, and across the envelope were the pencilled words, "Killed in action."

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A letter from his officer will best describe the closing scene. "Cownie was with my platoon when he was killed. He was a very fine leader and organiser, a first-class sniper, and a splendid fellow, as plucky as they are made. He met his death trying to locate a machine gun, and was killed outright, suffering no pain. He was in front of the others, and it was owing to this that we could not get his body in, though a sergeant and I tried. When about thirty yards from him we got caught by machine-gun fire, and had to get back. It is with great regret that I have to write this letter, for he was a man I particularly respected and trusted."

It was one Sunday night at the Soldiers' Rest, just before the commencement of the service, that I heard of the passing of my friend. Later in the evening I referred to Cownie, and many in the audience were deeply touched, for they knew him personally. One young soldier who for several weeks had served with him out at the front, and had returned badly wounded with shrapnel, broke down completely and sobbed aloud. Then to the surprise of all he knelt, and poured out his heart in humble, pleading tones, asking that Cownie's God might be his God, and that he too might be made "faithful unto death." As the prayer rose like incense at

the evening sacrifice the men instinctively bowed their heads. When I first heard of Jock's death I could not reconcile myself to it. "Why," I asked, "should a life so valuable and necessary be thus cut short?" But while listening to the lad's earnest petition the perplexity and questionings which had troubled me passed away. "I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.'"

CHAPTER II

THE IDENTIFICATION BADGE

"O wonderful name which the glorified bear,
The 'new name' which Jesus bestows on us there;
To him that o'ercometh 'twill only be given,
Blest sign of approval, our welcome to Heaven."

"**I** FELT a bit queer when he gave it to me," was the remark made by a young soldier after receiving his identification badge from the hands of one of his officers. The retreat from Mons had just taken place, and men were being hurried out to France to the aid of our small army, which had so successfully encountered the enemy hosts.

I was making a call at one of the centres where a number of men were billeted, and in the dreary space beneath the large grand stand of a football ground some hundreds of soldiers belonging to the Welsh Regiment were assembled. In the centre had been placed a table, at which a young officer was sitting, and, as the names were called out, a procession of lads filed by to receive their identi-

fication badges. There was an assumption of gaiety about the whole proceeding, which moved one more than any open manifestation of sadness; for the attempts at wit and the forced laughter with which the feeblest joke was greeted were the unselfish efforts of brave lads who strove to banish from the thoughts of their comrades the consciousness that soon they would be called upon to look death in the face. How grave were the issues involved each knew full well. Should his voice be for ever hushed, the small disc found upon him would, perchance, utter a message destined to break some loving heart.

There was a lull in the proceedings and the officer withdrew. I knew most of the men, and many of them now came to me with requests for slight services to be rendered. I sat down at the table which the officer had been using, and after receiving a number of letters to be posted—for the men were confined to their quarters—and making note of various small commissions with which they entrusted me, I rose to leave. Standing in the background was the officer, Captain Herd, whose place I had unconsciously usurped. Instead of turning me out he had quietly waited until I had finished. This was only one of the many kindly deeds he had performed to aid the work among the troops. I expressed my regret,

but he smilingly said that he was only too pleased that his rough-and-ready desk had been of service.

During the strenuous weeks which followed we occasionally met, and when he left Cardiff in charge of a draft, I was the last person at the station to bid him farewell. Was it a premonition of what was coming that made me turn and say for the second time, "Good-bye"? Involuntarily I used the words, "May God be with you!"

He had been eager to play his part in the great struggle. On previous occasions when we had seen drafts leave, he had often told me how he longed to go with them. Under the heading of "Roll of Honour" in our newspapers came my first intimation that his earthly warfare was accomplished. A little later, some of his own men who had been wounded returned home, and with mingled sorrow and pride described the closing scene of his life.

A few brief days at the firing line, and then came his glorious end. Whilst in the trenches the bursting of an enemy's shell left him sadly mutilated, and he at once knew that his moments were numbered. "Sing me a hymn," was the dying request to his men, who knew and loved him, as they gathered round. Their voices faltered, and it was Captain Herd himself who started "Nearer my God to Thee," the others joining in.

This was followed by "Jesu, Lover of my Soul." As he was being borne away from the firing line, and before medical aid could be of avail, he was at rest, for his brave spirit had received its Home-call.

A couple of months later, a young soldier who had come back wounded said, "I served under Captain Herd, and when I learnt that he was killed, I got them to show me where he was buried. In a house that had been knocked about by shell-fire I had found some artificial flowers, and I laid them on his grave." "What made you do that?" I asked. "Because I loved him," said the lad simply.

In his willingness to lay down his life for others the soldier shows that he is committing himself to earth's highest enterprise. As his hand closes over the small disc bearing his name, he feels that it foreshadows strife and sacrifice. "The Lord knoweth them that are His," but the identification badge from above is bestowed by the hand of Infinite Love only when earth's warfare is accomplished, and the rest and peace of heaven are won. It is the emblem of special and intimate love, for He says, "To him that overcometh will I give a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

CHAPTER III

HOW TOMMY TRAILS THE PEN

"The pen proclaims the man."

SOME years ago I was told of a young sailor who asked a gentleman to write a letter for him. Pen and paper were at hand, so instructions as to how to begin were sought for. "Dearest Dolly," was the start made in very emphatic tones. A long silence followed, while the youthful face became suffused with blushes. "What next?" inquired the gentleman kindly. Another pause, and then with a broad smile the young sailor exclaimed, "Oh, *you* know what to put, sir!"

Sometimes one would welcome carte blanche like this. Recently one of our workers undertook to write a farewell letter to the wife of a soldier who was just leaving for the front. "How shall I commence?" she asked. "Mrs. Dash," was the startling reply. The lady looked up in astonishment. "Surely that is a very cold

beginning," she said. This remonstrance brought to light a pitiful tale. The man had parted from his wife in anger, and he had no desire to make up their quarrel before he left the homeland. The writer tactfully pleaded with him until he grudgingly mollified the form of address to "Dear Annie." Some hard, cutting sentences followed, but they were tempered by the kindly wisdom of the scribe, with his reluctant permission. When at the end he dictated: "This is from John Dash," the lady put down her pen and, looking reproachfully at him, said, "Surely you are not going to send this letter without the dear word 'husband' in it? Think! It may be the last opportunity you will ever have of writing to her." No one could mistake the sympathy and goodwill which shone in the gentle woman's countenance; and the sullen expression he had worn softened as he asked shamefacedly, "What would *you* say, lady?" "I should say, 'Your loving husband,'" she replied. And so it was settled. Shortly afterwards he left to catch his train, his face now radiant with smiles.

When in a foreign land how tidings from home are treasured! One young soldier who belonged to the Canadian Expeditionary Force and had left his young wife in the Land of the Maple Leaf, wrote: "It is nice to get a letter from home. It

helps you to kind of know that things are all right. I received one to-day, and it contained a photo of my baby which I have never seen. I think more of that photo than of any I have got, and I have quite a lot saved up."

When the sailor or the soldier, leaving all that is dear to him, goes forth to fight, he is still in spirit with those at home; and it is to them that his heart untravelled fondly

"turns with ceaseless pain,
And drags at each remove a lengthening chain."

Every letter from the homeland, even though the writer be unknown, is sweet refreshment.

Some Christmas gifts were forwarded to men at the front, and one of the parcels contained a letter from a little boy aged four. It fell into the hands of a private in the 10th Royal Hussars. The heart that beats beneath the uniform is revealed in the following acknowledgment which he sent: "I received your parcel and do not know how to thank you enough for it. The socks and gloves were splendid. I shared the cakes and sweets with some of my comrades, and they were an enormous treat to us. You ask me how I like being in the trenches. My reply to you is that it is my duty. I have a little boy of my own, and at night, when you are all asleep, I often wonder how he is getting on, but I know he is safer than

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I am. I expect you are getting ready for Christmas, and I hope you will have a merry one. You must hang your stocking up, little man, and if I see Father Christmas in the trenches I will tell him not to forget you for being so good to me. I should like your photo, if you have one. You must be sure to let me have a letter by return, so good-night, and God bless you."

At the front there are times when the difficulties of letter-writing are well-nigh insuperable. A soldier serving in Macedonia wrote: "I have been wanting to send you a line for a long time, but it is next to impossible to get writing-paper. I tried to make envelopes, but had to throw it up as a bad job. I was lucky enough to drop across this paper through being sent to hospital."

In response to a request I sent some writing-paper to the Dardanelles and received this reply: "The writing-paper you sent was most useful, as we had nothing to light a fire with."

One lad who was evidently conscious of an aching void in life said: "Send me something to please me;" while another was much more definite, and wrote: "The night I told you I was homeless and friendless you promised to be a brother to me: I write as a brother to you. Please send me a tin of Swiss milk with cocoa in it, which costs tenpence, and won't break

you." Yet another, who was on active service — shall I say *very* active service? — added this postscript: "I am hopping for some more cigarettes."

Sometimes the letters come not with a request for a trifling gift but seeking advice, and that is a very different matter. A young soldier wrote: "Some of our chaps has an orful arm and I am in an orkerd position for they also wants me to be vaccarated and nocklooted write back sir and tell me what to do."

I too have been in "orkerd" positions. A discharged soldier asked me to help him to fill up a form with a view of obtaining payment of a Treasury note, which inadvertently had been partially destroyed. Government documents always inspire me with feelings of awe, and it was with a sense of grave responsibility that I began to fill in the answers to the numberless questions demanded in the printed form. The replies made by the anxious man respecting the partly destroyed pound note were definite and satisfactory on all points, including those of time and place, and when the next question was read out to him, "In what manner?" he at once replied in a straightforward way, "Baby ate it."

I regret to say that the question which

followed proved too much for both him and me. It was this: "What has become of the missing portion of the note?"

One of my letters intended for another man by a strange chance fell into the hands of a sergeant who bore the same name. He answered it, explaining the mistake, saying that as he had but few friends he too would like to become one of my correspondents. He was quite frank about himself, and added: "I must confess that I am not a white sheep—but I do not think I am quite a black one." Later we met, and I was thankful that through a letter which had wandered I had found a friend of true worth.

Unlike the sergeant to whom I have just referred, another wearer of khaki wrote with happy confidence: "I am server to the chaplain, so, you see, I am still in with God."

A youthful soldier wrote in French telling me that when serving on the Western front he had fallen in love with a young French lady who had given him a charming present, and whom he hoped to marry after the war. His enthusiasm was delightful, but I feared he was perhaps too sanguine. Later, he was sent to Salonika, and my forebodings proved correct, for I received a very doleful letter, written this time in English, in which he said: "Can you

realise how a fellow feels when he is very much in love and does not get a letter from his girl? I wrote to the young French lady who gave me the present, but I never received a reply. I think it was too bad, but perhaps she had a young man. This is all I have to say at present." A sudden peace and resignation seemed, however, to have regained possession of his heart, for he closed with this postscript: "He leadeth me beside the still waters."

Let me conclude this chapter with a single illustration to show that sometimes Tommy trails his pen in a very deft manner. One of my correspondents wrote from the trenches: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. Please send me a mouth organ."

CHAPTER IV

QUICKSANDS

"On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

"ONLY a drunken sailor!" were the words which fell upon my ears as a young seaman, with loud voice and staggering gait, passed down the street. The chambers of his soul were now resounding with the harsh discord of passion and sin, but what possibilities were slumbering in the heart of that lad, waiting for the hand of sympathy to touch the chords of love and bring forth heavenly music! "Only a drunken sailor!" and the onlookers laughed as they stepped on one side to give him a wide berth. No one spoke to him, and it was with a general air of relief that they watched him pass on.

I will tell you a true incident of another lad such as this. It was a Sunday evening, and we were drawing near to the close of the service at the Rest. From the platform, while looking down upon the audience of seamen which filled

the hall, my attention was arrested by a young man who held up his hand as a signal that he wished to speak to me. Presently the singing of a hymn afforded an opportunity of going to him. Surrounded by his shipmates, he greeted me with, "Don't you remember me?" I assured him I remembered his face, but for the moment could not "locate" him. "Oh yes, you know me. Why, it's just over four months ago I came in here one night drunk, and at the close of the meeting you took me to your room and prayed with me, and I gave my heart to God." This introduction brought the whole scene to my mind. It was on a Friday night in June, and he was much the worse for drink. The story of redeeming love and the singing of hymns seemed to have touched his heart and sobered him, and at the close of the meeting he gladly signed the temperance pledge. He was leaving port the next day, so before saying "Good-bye" we knelt together and asked our Heavenly Father to bless him, and make him a true servant of the Cross. How that prayer was answered the following narrative will tell.

We sat in a little friendly group, as the meeting had now ended, and with his shipmates to prompt him occasionally, he told his story: "As you know, I sailed as an A.B. on the barque *Georgina*,

bound for Rosario. Whilst in the River Plate and nearing Monte Video, we ran aground on a sandbank in thick, rough weather. The storm increased, and the heavy seas that poured over the ship swept the decks. No boat could be launched, and as the vessel filled with water she began to sink in the quicksand, and we had to take to the rigging. The following morning, Thursday, a tug came out from Monte Video, but only to signal, 'Cannot come any closer.' Thursday night, Friday, and Friday night went by. Tug-boats came out repeatedly, looked at the wretched plight of the ship, and returned, making the same signal. We had not been able to save any extra clothing; the weather was intensely cold, and we were drenched with sea and spray. Since Thursday morning we had had nothing to eat or drink. Death stared us in the face. At first we had taken refuge in the mizzen-rigging, but the hull had by this time sunk deep in the sand. We decided on Friday that we must take to the foretop for refuge from the seas. In climbing the main rigging one poor lad, numbed with cold, lost his hold and fell over. Three men and another apprentice gave up the struggle and stopped half-way, looking down hopelessly on the wreck below. After a while the three men managed to climb along the mainstay

and reached the foremast in safety ; but the boy, exhausted, benumbed, and terrified, gave it up after four attempts. I was on the foretop, and signalled to the poor lad to make another effort. This time he reached the bottom of the stay fastened to the foremast, but could do no more, and began to cry for help, expecting each moment to be washed off. No one offered to go to his rescue, for to attempt it seemed certain death. Realising this, I felt it was my place to volunteer, for I knew that I was the only praying man on board. I said, ' Here, mates, I'm going. I'm not afraid to die—I'm saved. Tie a rope round me ! ' I made my way through the breaking seas until I reached the little lad, and, tying the rope fast round him, brought him to the foretop in safety.

“ There we clung, fourteen of us, soaked and starving, until Saturday morning, when the indignant British residents at Monte Video, after raising 2000 dollars as a reward for the rescue of their countrymen, persuaded two lifeboats and a tug to put out. It was only just in time, for we were hardly taken off the wreck before she broke up altogether. We were sent to England, and arrived in London, where the mother of the little lad whom I had rescued lived. When I was coming down to Cardiff she came to see me off ; ”

and, bursting out in a hearty laugh, with a look of mingled amusement and self-consciousness, he added, "She flung her arms around my neck because I had saved her boy, and she would hardly let me come away."

When he had ceased speaking I heard the echo of the words, "Only a drunken sailor!" Yes, but that which is weak and faulty can, by the transforming touch of the hand of Christ, be changed into strength and beauty.

CHAPTER V

THE JOURNEY BY THE WAY

“ It is enough, if, at the close of day,
Thou, resting wearied limbs, canst truly say,
‘ I have walked humbly with my God this day,’—
It is enough.”

SOMETIMES when travelling my attempts to be companionable have failed ingloriously. On one occasion I was sitting opposite a sailor in a train. The lad was crouched up in the corner of the compartment, with his eyes lowered and his hands thrust deep into his pockets. His somewhat dejected air aroused my sympathy, and as he had nothing wherewith to beguile the tedium of the journey, I offered him my newspapers. They were shyly but firmly declined. Later I tried to draw him into conversation, but the answers were all in monosyllables, so I returned to the book I had been reading. Presently I was startled by the young sailor saying, “ Haven’t I seen you at the Sailors’ Rest in Cardiff, sir ? ” The lad had suddenly recognised

me, and at once began to talk volubly. When near the end of my journey I said, "I have often found, when travelling, that people are unsociable, and if you speak they will only glance over their newspapers to answer 'Yes' or 'No,' but sailors and soldiers are different, and are always ready for a friendly chat. Now when I began talking to you, why was it that you scarcely spoke?"

"Well, you see, it was like this," he replied, looking very knowing. "The other day I read in the newspaper that a dressed-up toff got into a train and gave a sailor a drink which was drugged, and robbed him of his money. I thought, before I recognised you, that perhaps you might turn out to be one of that sort, or a three-card trick man!"

I have never regretted the practice of trying to interest myself in fellow-passengers, and on several occasions, even when circumstances seemed unpropitious, by a few earnest words a friendship has started which has stood the test of many years.

On one occasion, just as the train was about to leave Bristol, four sailors, all very much the worse for drink, tumbled into my compartment. It seemed likely that the journey to South Wales would be an unpleasant one. My first impulse—and it was a strong one—was to change to

another carriage. But when I saw how young the men were, and their helpless condition, my feeling of repugnance was transformed into one of pity. I resolved to stay where I was, and presently I entered into conversation with them. Poor lads, it was difficult to get any sense out of them. The youngest had a pleasing face, but seemed bent on mischief and was very unruly. As we conversed he quieted down, and before long I led him to talk about his home. It was in Edinburgh, but he had not been there for some years, neither had he written to his people. After a while he strove to give expression to his feelings of goodwill towards me by emptying his pockets of their contents and begging me to accept them. When drawing near the Severn Tunnel he turned to his companions, and with much solemnity pronounced me to be "a perfect gentleman." Before we had reached Newport he begged me to regard him as my friend for life—in fact, he would be a brother to me! I said that I would gladly accept the proffered honour if he would be a good lad and give up the drink. He cheerfully promised to comply with these conditions, and as proof of his sincerity he gave me his hand upon it. On arriving at Cardiff I said, "You must let me take you to the Sailors' Rest." "Not for worlds," he replied; "but I'll

come there to-night and sign the pledge." I was greatly disappointed, for I feared the boy wanted to make his escape. Once more I urged him to come with me, but he was obdurate. "No," he said, "I'm drunk, very drunk, and you shall not be seen with me in this state." He would not walk a step in my company, and reluctantly I left him on the platform.

That night, to my surprise, he came to the Rest and signed the pledge. Some months later he journeyed to Edinburgh to see his people, but his mother had moved, and it took him the best part of a day to trace her to her new home. Writing in regard to this visit he said: "I had changed so much for the better that they hardly believed it was me. And now, Brother, I'm going to turn poet:

" 'Where'er thou art, whate'er thy lot,
One friend at least forgets thee not.' "

Five years have elapsed since this letter came, but he has paid repeated visits to the Rest, and from nearly every port he touches at comes a letter. A recent one runs as follows: "Our ship was torpedoed off Crete. It happened at 7.30 in the evening, just as it was growing dusk. Some of the crew were killed, but twenty-nine of us were saved. We never saw anything of the submarine, only the wake of the torpedo when it



THE WORK OF THE HUN.

(By kind permission of Mr. J. Bernard Gribble.)

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was too late. We took to the boats and saw the old ship sink, carrying our dead comrades to their ocean grave. May God protect their wives and little ones! The sea was rather rough, and we had an unpleasant time, but five hours later we were picked up. Please will you sing 'Eternal Father, strong to save,' at the Rest next Sunday night?" His latest letter announced his safe arrival at home to spend a brief furlough with his newly-wedded wife.

I have always been a believer in the ministry "by the way," and in the urgency of the command to go out into the highways and hedges to compel them to come in.

Oftentimes the "lost" fear to venture within sacred walls; and when seeking to win wanderers back to the narrow way, he who is wise will not neglect to turn his steps to the rough roads of the world and its thorny bypaths. We must away with the fatal error that any gifts are good enough for open-air work. The most eloquent speakers and sweetest singers should proclaim the glad tidings to the passer-by.

It was not within a tabernacle made by earthly hands, but when He went about doing good, that the multitude thronged and pressed Him. He wrought His wonders daily as He journeyed

by the way, and there is the promise to His labourers, who will go forth bearing precious seed, that they shall come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.

At one of our open-air meetings a woman stopped to listen, and some gracious constraining influence brought her again and again to hear "the old, old story." Eventually she entered into conversation with one of our workers, and told her of the good home and true friends she had forsaken years before to follow the sorrowful trade,

"That slurs our cruel streets from end to end
With eighty thousand women in one smile,
Who only smile at night beneath the gas."

Completely breaking down, she cried in despairing tones, "I have sinned too deeply to be forgiven." Shortly afterwards she was taken ill and sent for the lady to whom she had confided her life-story. "I am dying," she said, "and I want you to ask the Rest workers to come and sing beneath my window; it will comfort me." Gladly complying with her request, the workers gathered outside the house, which was in a notorious and squalid slum. The dying woman asked for the hymn, "Nearer my God to Thee." Then followed the solo, "Just lean upon the arms of Jesus." Later, she told our visitor that Light

and Peace had come to her troubled spirit, and she felt that the end was near. That night was her last on earth. There lay the dying woman, surrounding her were her former companions, who kept up a perpetual tumult of wailing. She pleaded with them to leave her, but in vain. Her pitiful appeals were refused with drunken obstinacy. Suddenly, endowed with superhuman strength, she sprang from her bed and thrust them from the room, for she felt that she could not die in their sinful presence, and they heard her turn the key in the door. Next morning, on breaking into the room, they found her dead.

“ Her lifeless body lay
A worn-out fetter, that the soul
Had broken and thrown away.”

Her longing had been fulfilled, and in solemn loneliness she had gazed upon the face of the Angel of Death when he came to lead her liberated spirit back to God.

When travelling in Palestine I visited the Lake of Galilee. Beneath a sky of wondrous blue, I lay in a small boat which rested on “ the waves He loved, the waves that kissed His feet,” and read the words recorded by St. Matthew: “ And His disciples came to Him and awoke Him saying, ‘ Lord, save us, we perish.’ Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and

there was a great calm." Surely, I thought, during my earthly course I shall never be nearer the Master than now, amidst these sacred scenes. But as I was musing a voice seemed to say, "He is not here, He has left these quiet shores and climbed yonder sunlit steeps to traverse the great highways of the world." And it was revealed to me that if we would draw near to our Lord, we must seek for Him, not where the bosom of the calm lake mirrors azure skies, but among His wayward and erring children. He came to liberate the captives of sin and to bind up the broken-hearted.

"The healing of His seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain ;
We touch Him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again."

CHAPTER VI

SPOON-FED

"Needs there groan a world in anguish just to teach us sympathy."

HOW many humble, earnest hearts have prayed that we may learn the lessons God would have us learn in these dark days of war! And surely that oft-repeated prayer is already in part being answered.

A common sorrow has spread abroad a feeling of sympathy and brotherhood, and we see happenings now that, before the war, we should have thought incredible. Multitudes of women who have been waited on all their lives now deem it a privilege to nurse and labour for the sick, while others stand hour after hour in cold, draughty canteens serving meals and washing up greasy crockery. Rich, indulgent folk who formerly thought the roads were made for them to spin along in their luxurious motors, now hardly like to be seen driving unless their car is packed with wounded men. And how gladly people have

given their money to help our brave lads get the all too few comforts that it is possible for them to have in their life of hardship and privation !

We are thankful for the spirit of gratitude and service which has been so freely displayed towards the soldiers, and it comes as a shock and rebuff to find that there are still some few who, while wrapping themselves around in luxury, can look grudgingly upon the scant comforts of others.

“ Don't you think that our soldiers are too spoon-fed ? ” said a rich merchant who had got much gold through the war, when asked to spend an evening among the troops. As I left him the words “ too spoon-fed ” rang in my ears, for they recalled an incident that a young soldier had related to me only a few nights before. He spoke of the awful scenes he had witnessed in the trenches, but added that it was afterward's, when he had been wounded and was in Netley Hospital, that an incident occurred which completely broke him down. “ I'm not a man of tears,” he said, “ but I wept like a child that day. A mother had travelled from Lancashire to see her boy, who was in the next bed to me. Upon arriving she was strongly urged not to go into the ward, but when she heard that her son was not likely to recover, she became insistent. Finding their persuasions were unavailing, the

authorities told her that the patient was suffering greatly, and that she must be very brave when she saw him.

"The sister brought her to the bedside and leant over the boy, saying, 'Here is your mother come to see you.' He turned his head and said, 'I am so glad you have come, mother, but I can't see you—I am blind.'

"The sorrowing mother replied bravely, 'Well, here is my hand, dear, take it,' and she held it towards him. 'Oh, mother, mother,' he cried, 'both my arms are blown off.' "

Upon my asking, "Did the poor lad die?" the young soldier replied sadly, "When I left hospital he was still alive."

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Some of our soldiers are indeed "spoon-fed!"

CHAPTER VII

CONQUERED

I. BANDS OF LOVE

"I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;

From those strong Feet that followed, followed after."

WE had been talking of the East, and one of its most splendid cities—Cairo, and our conversation roamed over many topics of interest and scenes familiar to both of us—the mosques, the mighty Nile, the Mohammedan University, with its eight thousand students, in the heart of the Egyptian capital, and the streets all full of movement and colour. Suddenly my young companion, who was seated with me at one of the small tables in our café, lowered his voice and said, "It was at Cairo I fought and conquered a crueller foe than any Hun that ever faced me."

Some little time before, the speaker had come

with an introduction from his brother Lewis, who had spent practically all his leisure hours at our Institution. I suppose he saw surprise and curiosity written in my face, as, drawing his chair nearer to me so that the men seated at neighbouring tables could not hear, he said, "I have never told you the story of my life. Would you like to hear it?" He did not wait for my reply, but told me how, after he enlisted, for some time, he was stationed at Pembroke Dock. Later he was sent to Cyprus, with but a poor opinion of teetotalism. He found the path of indulgence in intoxicants was indeed an easy one. "I could buy a couple of glasses of strong spirits for a penny," he exclaimed, "and I soon became a drunkard, and found I could not leave it off. Entangled in this fashion, I fell a victim to other sins. I realised I had become a helpless creature, and, as I felt myself sinking deeper and deeper, I struggled hard to get free from it all. I joined the church choir, thinking that would help me, and with guilty conscience sang sacred words and familiar hymns with a tongue ever ready to curse. I resolved not to visit the drinking-bar, and once I held out for two days, but when night came it found me there again in a helpless condition. My old companions used to laugh at my folly,

and then even they forsook me, and I gave myself up as lost."

His voice had now almost dropped to a whisper, and a look of pain was in his face as tears filled his eyes. I put my hand on his arm. "Don't tell me any more," I urged, "for I see that the memory of the past fills you with sorrow." He remained silent for a couple of minutes, and when he had once more gained the mastery of himself he said, "I want you to listen to me, for what I have to say may help you sometimes when you are talking to the others and warning them. A few months after this we got transferred to Egypt, and I found myself with the battalion in Cairo. Amidst new surroundings I once more plunged into the old sinful life, but I got no joy or happiness from it, and unless I had money in my pocket nobody pretended to be my friend. My means were not sufficient to satisfy my craving for drink, so I took to gambling. At the start I found this to be a success, but the money I won was quickly fooled away. Later the tide turned, and for months I played with luck against me. Time after time I decided to give it up, but as soon as I drew my pay, thinking always that my luck would change, I could not resist the temptation, and in most cases I would finish with

empty pockets. All interest in my duty and even in myself was going, and at last, in order to get money to gamble, I took to selling my kit. Of course this made me disliked by my company officers, and then came days of being confined to barracks, with all its humiliation and drawbacks. Each day brought some addition to my misery. I knew the cause of my unhappy life, yet I was helpless and could not give it up. The depression which now fell upon my spirits was so terrible that even the drinking-bars seemed to grow cold and dark, and I realised that Cairo, with the glare of its flaunting and shameless attractions to which I had been a victim, was but a city of great sin and full of foul cruelty."

I could so vividly picture his story, for I had been visiting Cairo at a time not far distant to his being stationed there. He went on to tell me how at last there came a crisis in his life, and he suddenly resolved to quit the haunts of men and fly to the desert. The sun had already set, but a strange silent force seemed to draw him past the brilliantly lighted houses, mean streets, and crowded thoroughfares, with their motley throng made up from many nations. Heedless of everything he rushed along the level road, and as the lights of the city faded and the sounds died

away in the distance, he looked up and saw the heavens resplendent with multi-coloured orbs, which glowed like the inwrought gems of the breastplate of some great high-priest. Breathless he reached the desert, and there, to use his exact words, " I felt the presence of a living God, and, not knowing how it came about, I found myself on my knees, pouring out my heart to Someone I had never seen or known. From that day I felt conscious of One who helped me; but I only partly broke with my old life. Just a month after my night in the desert I was standing in the barrack square, feeling very miserable, when someone touched me on the shoulder. I found it was a corporal whom I had always regarded as my greatest enemy. He was a real Christian, and, before turning in, never feared to kneel and pray in a room full of rowdy men. I had often treated him badly, but he spoke kindly to me, and asked me what was wrong. At first I would not answer him, but somehow he learnt from me that my money was all gone in gambling, and that I had eaten nothing all day. He took me off and we had a good meal together; afterwards he prevailed upon me to go to the Soldiers' Home. I was dressed in a dirty old fatigue suit, and on hearing that there was to be a meeting presently to which soldiers were coming, I made for the

door. At last I yielded to the corporal's persuasion to attend the meeting. I asked him to let me go to change my clothes, giving him my word of honour that I would come back. On my return I found them all waiting, and kind words were spoken to me. Before the meeting was over I knelt at the Cross of Christ, and from that hour I was given strength to overcome my besetting sins. While my new friends were talking to me, I lifted up my eyes and fixed them upon these words which hung upon the wall: 'For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' As I read this I was deeply moved. Soon the little meeting closed. Walking across the barrack square alone I looked up and I recalled that night in the desert. Again, like great lamps, the stars were lighting up the sky, and to me they seemed to spell out the words, 'For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.' I do not know if it was a vision, but I seemed to see Christ upon the Cross. An awful sense of shame overwhelmed me as I recalled the many years I had spent in driving the nails deeper into those Hands and Feet. But I resolved that henceforth I would make up for it, and, forsaking my old companions, try to learn more about my Saviour. Arriving

at the barrack-room, I came face to face with my old bar-room and card-playing pals. Some had just come from the canteen and were in a quarrelsome mood; others had already gone to their cots, for they had drunk more beer than was good for them, and they wanted to avoid the guard-room. In a far corner were a group of men with a pack of cards, trying to rob one another of their money. Of course up goes the cry, 'Where have you been to-night? What's been your little game all on your own?' When I told them where I had been, and spoke of my conversion, they greeted it with derision, and shouted out, 'Good old Bible-puncher.' In reply to all they said I only answered, 'I am going to try to live a better life.' When I fell on my knees beside my bed my companions indulged in a fresh outburst of jeers and laughter, but my spirit seemed to soar above my surroundings. I was lost in the presence of Christ, and my joy was so great that I did not mind what I suffered for Him. The days that followed were ones of great persecution by those whom I had forsaken, but Jesus was always by my side, and I daily found that my faith grew stronger."

Telling me this narrative was but the beginning of a friendship which has stood the test of time. One day he showed me the memoirs he had

written relating his experiences during the early days of the war. They impressed me so deeply that I asked his permission to give quotations from them in this book.

I have devoted some pages to these extracts, which to me are but the complement to his life-story, testifying that He who "is able to save" is also "able to keep."

II. "NEARER TO THEE"

"Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to Thee."

Jan. 16, 1915.

Left Winchester at 9 a.m., *en route* for Southampton, and embarked for France at 3 p.m. It is very cold. No blankets to sleep in.

Jan. 18, 1915.

Arrived in France, disembarked at Havre, and were issued sheep-skin coats and one blanket.

Jan. 19, 1915.

Entrained at Havre at 2 p.m., in cattle trucks—35 men in a truck—very uncomfortable, but I cannot complain. Did not Christ suffer more and opened not His mouth.

Jan. 20, 1915.

Arrived at H—— at 4 p.m., detrained, and marched off to the village of N——, where we were billeted in a storeroom, packed in like sardines.

Jan. 23, 1915.

God is worthy to be praised for such a glorious day. The land is frozen hard, and the sun is shining brightly. At 4.30 p.m. I mount picket for twenty-four hours. There has been a continual thundering of guns all day long.

Jan. 24, 1915.

Was placed in charge of a picket consisting of three men and myself, and was posted at one entrance of the village of M——. We heard very sharp rifle fire about 10 p.m., and an occasional blast from a big gun. The night was very cold, with a cutting wind blowing. All my spare time was occupied in prayer for my comrades in the trenches.

Jan. 25, 1915.

Have been ordered to stand fast and not to leave the village. My heart went out in sympathy to one lad who was boasting and blaspheming God. He said he was not afraid to die, but after explaining the way of Salvation and the Day of Reckoning to him, he yielded to

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the truth, and was glad to accept a small book which I thought would help him.

Jan. 27, 1915.

Have received orders to stand in readiness to move off to the firing line at any minute. A rush is expected owing to the Kaiser's birthday.

Jan. 28, 1915.

Have been inspected to-day by General French. It is very cold; the ground is frozen hard. There are signs of snow, and a very cold wind is blowing. One of my comrades took me gently by the arm this morning and told me that he had signed his name to John iii. 16. Praise God for this.

Feb. 1, 1915.

My 28th birthday. In spite of present circumstances my heart has been filled with peace and joy. Duty has not been over-pressing, and the thought of dear ones thinking of me has helped to increase my happiness.

Feb. 2, 1915.

Advancing nearer the firing line to-day, and moved off by motor-bus at 1 p.m., riding about 25 miles on top of the bus. Very cold and rainy. About 10 p.m. we arrived at V——. Had a drink of cold tea, then marched to Ypres, and in spite of shot and shell went straight to our dug-out in

support of the Cheshire Regiment, which took the trenches.

Feb. 3, 1915.

Got to my dug-out this morning about 4 a.m., the French soldiers leaving as we entered. In spite of the reports from guns and the shot and shell whistling through the air, I threw myself down and slept peacefully in His care. I was awakened by an officer at 6 a.m., for the purpose of standing to arms. Our artillery has been busy all day, a severe battle taking place about 8 p.m.; the enemy, attempting to break through, were driven back with heavy loss.

Feb. 4, 1915.

Went into action at 3 p.m. in support of the Cheshires, and were under continual rifle fire. We simply kept our heads down and let the enemy waste their ammunition.

Feb. 5, 1915.

Were relieved from the trenches about 4 a.m., and marched off through mud and water, arriving at a village which was completely in ruins. We then came under fire, and got into a brick shed to await night, to move off again in the dark.

The enemy's shells are still bursting over us, but I fear not, God is my fortress. We went into the trenches again at 7 p.m. One man marching in front of me was wounded.

Feb. 6, 1915.

Nearly up to our knees in mud and water in some parts of the trenches. It is very cold and trying having to keep watch at night, but we are able to get some sleep in the daytime, though it is impossible to keep warm. God is good, and giveth patience to those who trust Him. The enemy's trenches are only 80 yards from ours, and we can see dead bodies lying in front of them. It is a terrible experience.

Feb. 7, 1915.

Relieved from the trenches and marched to Ypres. I felt very ill and fatigued, and thought I should have to fall out. My throat was very sore and I could scarcely breathe, but I lifted my heart to God and received strength to continue the march. We got to our resting-place about 3 a.m., where I threw myself down on the ground and fell asleep. Praise God for strength.

Feb. 8, 1915.

Had a day of rest until 6 p.m., then moved off to the trenches, getting there about 11 p.m. It is a very cold night but fairly quiet. There is a little rain and it is very trying, but my happiness is in Christ which no man can take away. I am quite fearless because I know that He is by my side. Oh, what comfort to feel that Jesus is near!

Feb. 9, 1915.

It is now 3 p.m., and we have just received a greeting of bullets from the enemy, but I simply lifted my heart to God. It is now very quiet, scarcely a shot being fired. God delights to answer our prayers. Praise Him for all things. It is raining hard and is very cold and uncomfortable. What should I do were not Christ my strength! How He comforts me.

Feb. 10, 1915.

Have had nothing since breakfast-time, and it is now 3 p.m. We cannot get a fire to make tea, but must just be content and praise God for His wonderful keeping power. We expect to be relieved about midnight and go to the rear in support. Five or six of my comrades gathered round me in the middle of the night to hear the wonderful story of Christ. One poor lad, whom I have known for several years, has just been wounded.

Feb. 11, 1915.

Relieved from the trenches about 12.30 midnight, exposed to an awful night's weather. We arrived at our dug-outs wet through, and found them full of water, but in them we had to lie down and sleep. How merciful God is to give us strength to endure such hardships! My heart gave way when I turned and saw myself and my

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comrades plastered in mud and wet through. May God have compassion upon us!

Feb. 13, 1915.

I am enjoying a day's rest. It is delightful to be away from the noise of battle for a little while, but we might be called out any minute. It is very cold and wet. May God have pity upon my comrades in the trenches. I have just delighted myself in reading a cheering letter from home.

Feb. 16, 1915.

On my way to the trenches I was up to my knees in mud, and we are now over our knees in water. This day has tested me, for I am wet through, covered with mud, and have to remain doubled up in the mud and water. My feet and legs are numbed, and I dare not raise my head or a bullet would pierce it. My company officer has just been killed, also a comrade, and there is a dead body under my feet. I can do nothing but pray to my Heavenly Father.

Feb. 17, 1915.

Rain all day, and my feet are so cold that I cannot feel them. Nearly up to my thighs in water. God is good to give me patience to bear it. A young lad close to me has just been shot dead. About 5.30 went out in search of a

wounded man, whose cries I could hear in the trench, and found him in a terrible condition.

Feb. 18, 1915.

It is cold and I am wet through, but what a sweet relief to get out of the trenches again. There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. O God, give us peace. We have orders to go out again to-night. My feet are bad and I am cold and stiff, but I know that Christ will stand by me right through. Praise Him !

Feb. 19, 1915.

This is the most peaceful day I have spent for the last fortnight. We are off to the trenches again to-night, but I know that Christ is with me wherever I go. How precious He is unto my soul ! I have just given out some tracts which I had in my haversack, and my comrades willingly received them.

Feb. 20, 1915.

I am sitting in the trench all doubled up, and shells are bursting close by and splashing mud and earth all over me. Though plastered in mud and water and very cold, still I feel His loving arms around me.

Feb. 21, 1915.

There is some heavy shell fire, and occasionally a bullet strikes the trench in which I am crouching. My bottle of water is gone, and I would

give anything for a drop of warm tea. It is now midday, and we hope to be relieved to-night. Praise God, it is quite a joy to study His most precious word, especially here in the trench.

Feb. 22, 1915.

Thank God for this day of great blessing. We returned from the trenches at 6 a.m. to find hot tea and soup waiting. How good it was after 54 hours in the trenches on one bottle of water! The Lord is good, and has kept me in safety. What can harm me when He is standing by?

Feb. 23, 1915.

Have been relieved from Ypres; left at 6 a.m. and marched 13 miles with very bad feet. We got safely to our billets at 2.30, expecting to remain a few days to get reorganised. My platoon of 48 men is reduced to 9, and I am left in command. It is sad indeed, but God's will be done.

Feb. 25, 1915.

What a day of peace and gladness. Billeted at B——. It is a nice place, and everything is at hand. I got a warm bath, and have plenty to eat and drink. On my way to get supper and a few things, the Lord suddenly gave me a message for a young lad whom I had just left. I at once

returned at His command, and the lad received the message.

Feb. 26, 1915.

The weather is still very bad, with hard frost and snow, and rain in between. I am suffering from frostbite, but nevertheless the Lord gives me a good heart and will give me strength. Praise Him. Promoted full corporal.

Feb. 27, 1915.

Again moved off nearer the trenches, to take our place as reserves for a few days. My feet are very sore and I am marching in great pain, but "I lift up mine eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help."

Feb. 28, 1915.

Billeted in a barn in a village called K—— in readiness for the trenches. I am suffering great pain, but I must endure, for there are such a few of us left, and I am platoon commander. Although I dread the trenches, I feel that God will give me strength.

Mar. 4, 1915.

It is fairly dry and warm here, but the enemy is making things pretty uncomfortable by shelling all around our cottage. It is a time of despondency, for every minute we are expecting a shell to burst in our midst. I have had the joy of reading the Scriptures and explaining the way

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of Salvation to my comrades. Some gladly heard, while others only laughed.

Mar. 5, 1915.

The trench I am now in is a palace compared to those at Ypres. It is quite dry, and there is good cover. Special boards have been prepared underfoot. The Germans are about 100 yards away. They threw several bombs at us last night but all fell short. Shells have been dropping near us, but there are no casualties. Go where you will there are dead bodies. The field is strewn with them, and we see men's arms and legs sticking out the sides of our trench.

Mar. 7, 1915.

The Sabbath Day of our God, and I am in the trenches helping to hold back the enemy. It has been raining all day. Just had a great shock. A bomb exploded two yards from me, but, thank God, no one was hurt.

Mar. 16, 1915.

The night passed away very peacefully, but it was rather cold. Very few shots were fired on our trench, and it is much the same to-day. Our artillery are firing shells over our heads. The birds have been singing beautifully, and this has broken some of the monotony. God delights to cheer us even by the singing of the birds.

April 4, 1915.

After digging as long as we could before daylight came on, we marched back to our shelter, where I lay down with my comrades. We kept each other warm, being so crowded. One does not mind being wet and covered with mud when so tired, for sleep soon vanquishes all. This is Easter Sunday. My first thought on waking was of Christ and His resurrection. I thank Him for His care of me.

April 6, 1915.

My duties have been very pressing owing to a big general inspection to be held to-morrow. Whilst proceeding to the orderly room on duty, whom should I hear shout from a party which was passing but my own dear brother Lewis.¹ How glad I was to see the old boy again! I chased the party, and spoke to the Sergeant-major with regard to getting Lewis transferred to my own company. The adjutant gave permission, and to-night the brother I love so much will sleep beside me.

April 8, 1915.

We still retain our place as reserves at the village of L——. There is no rest for us, as it is parade after parade. My brother and I and a

¹ I regret to say that four months later Lewis, who was equally as fine a character as his brother, was killed in action.
—J. G. G.

young lad went out to pray. How sweet it is to meet with God in the open! Our band of believers is increasing. God is in our midst.

April 9, 1915.

On hearing the report from a German gun, every ear is strained for the sound of the screeching shell. At the first bang every head is hidden in some corner or behind any structure close at hand. Often men throw themselves face downwards on the ground. Being under shell fire is one of the most terrible experiences. It is a common practice with the Germans to use explosive bullets. They are known by the havoc they cause to a sandbag or the ghastly wounds they make—sometimes when striking a tree there is a large flame and a puff of smoke.

April 12, 1915.

My brother and I took a walk in the fields. It is good to watch the farmers ploughing. Were it not for the shells over our heads and the thunder of the guns, one could not realise that war was raging. The unconcern of the inhabitants is wonderful. It is the same with our troops, they are singing and taking part in games of different descriptions.

April 17, 1915.

We again left for the trenches, marching off at

5.30, and arrived about 10 p.m. The first thing I saw was a tail of fire from a huge bomb flying through the air. The explosion was terrible.

April 22, 1915.

After I had had my wound dressed in the trenches, Lewis came to see what had happened, and showed me a hole in his coat. He said he had been hit at the same time as I had, but that it was nothing to speak of. I made him pull off his coat, and found he had been hit in the arm. Our dear friend received a fatal wound. We went to the dressing-station, and were with him when he passed away, and we were afterwards sent to a Field Hospital. Next I journeyed to G—— and had a few hours' sleep, then to the station in an ambulance waggon, and entrained for the Anglo-American Hospital at Boulogne, where I received every attention, and had a good sleep in a nice warm bed.

May 3, 1915.

Each day there are large numbers of wounded coming in, and many leaving for the Homeland; and this is the saddest part for me. I never felt their going so much as to-day, for I have grown more and more weary of being in this place. I am tempted to envy those who are going home, but it is God's will that I should

remain here. St. Paul's words are my stay :
" I have learnt in whatsoever state I am, there-
with to be content." Still the days go on
without bringing me any tidings of the loved
ones at home.

May 8, 1915.

God has answered my prayers. I am on the
list for home, and have drawn my kit and
expect to be off in the morning. It has come
as a great surprise to me, although I knew that
all things were possible with God. I feel I do
not deserve this because of my poor faith, but
God knew my heart's desire.

" God holds the key of all unknown,
And I am glad ;
If other hands should hold the key,
Or if He trusted it to me,
I might be sad."

CHAPTER VIII

ON MATRIMONY

“ Man has his will—but woman has her way ! ”

IT is indeed a delicate piece of flattery when people ask for our advice. Though perhaps wholly ignorant regarding the subject sought to be discussed, a glow of satisfaction is experienced when we are credited by the inquirer with stores of wisdom.

When I first became actively interested in the welfare of sailors and soldiers, I felt very much complimented by the many who sought to talk over their love affairs with me. I soon discovered that none of them heeded my advice in the least ; what each wanted was someone to listen patiently to a full recital of the charms and virtues of his fair one, and to endorse and praise plans which were already cut-and-dried.

It is, perhaps, the widespread belief that marriages are made in heaven, which makes submission to matrimony so easy to some men.

A soldier once said to me, "My wife is fifty-one and I am thirty-nine. She was a widow, and gave up a pension of thirty-two shillings a month to become Mrs. Hopkins. It wasn't *my* wish to get married; it was all her doing. But there, I suppose it had to be, and here I am." He was shortly leaving to fight in France, but seemed braced up to bear the impending parting by recalling the fact, which he recounted with evident pride, that "she was a great scholar, and had had two years of piano-fort."

When calling at a barrack-room to invite the men to a concert, one of them—who had yielded to "love's sweet tyranny"—said, "I should like to come, but I fear I have to see my wife."

Once I ventured to recommend matrimony to a man. Whilst fighting in France he had lost a leg and was using crutches. "You ought to get married," I said, "and have a nice wife to take care of you." "I never see'd a woman yet," he replied, "that *I'd* ask to have me." "That is of no consequence," I remarked, "for this is leap year." "Leap year is it?" he cried. "Well, she won't leap fast enough to catch *me*," and he hopped off nimbly on his crutches.

A love-letter is regarded by most people as pre-eminently a private communication, but I am often given them to read. Perhaps the owners

want someone to know what a wealth of affection has been lavished upon them. "She does seem fond of you," I once remarked, as I returned the letter a bandsman had shown me. "How did you come to know her?" "I think," said he, "it is what you call a bit of a romance." And indeed he was right, and this is his story: Orphaned at an early age, he was brought up in a large school, from whence he was launched into the army, and had no friend or relative to turn to. He accompanied his regiment to India. "It was quite natural," he said, "that I should never look for a letter, but I got to dread Christmas-time, for each year the chaps used to talk for weeks beforehand about the letters and parcels they would get. One Christmas, to my great surprise and delight, I received a card. I found out that my pal in the regiment had put his sister up to sending it, because he knew I had no home or friends. Well, of course, I had to write to thank her, and I said I hoped she would send me a letter, and that's how it all began. We started a regular correspondence, and although we wrote simply as friends, I knew how it would end. I found her out directly I got to England, and we fixed things up, and now, before I go out to do my bit in France, we mean to get married."

About two o'clock one morning a man straight from the trenches arrived at the Rest all travel-stained and weary. His white, drawn face spoke more eloquently than words of untold hardships borne for long weary months in the shadow of death. When he had finished his supper and was enjoying a smoke, we entered into conversation. In speaking of the Midlands I chanced to mention the name of a village I had visited in Leicestershire. He started up and cried, "Why, that is my home!" The lines of his face softened as we talked of familiar scenes and of people that we knew. From the wallet he was carrying he produced the photograph of a sweet-faced woman, and said, "This is my wife, and if ever there was a Christian she is one. I'm not a religious man, but I know she prays for me." Tears filled his eyes, and, regardless of the scores of soldiers grouped about us, as we sat in the Rest café, he passionately kissed the portrait, and said with fervour, "May God answer her prayers, and make me a good man!"

What different ways people have of looking at things! I recall a startling view of marriage that a certain colonel took. A young officer was busy one morning at the railway station seeing off a draft of men to the front. No one who watched him as he gave orders and moved

here and there among the troops would have guessed that within the next couple of hours he was to figure as the bridegroom at a wedding in a cathedral.

"Is it not rather hard lines," said my wife, "for poor Captain Dash to have so much to do on his wedding morning?" "Not at all," replied the colonel, "'tis a blessing in disguise; it keeps the poor beggar from thinking."

When the perplexed lover can find no sympathetic ear into which to breathe his sighs and misgivings, he sometimes turns for relief to his pen.

A sailor wrote to tell me how deeply grieved he felt because his young lady had broken off their engagement. I was not informed of the renewal of the alliance, but later a letter came telling me it was all off *again*, and this time it was his doing. Shortly after came the pleasing news that all difficulties had been overcome, and the lovers were once more filled with confidence and happiness. I am not a hard man, but I found my sympathy waning when Jack wrote and, for the third time, announced that his engagement was ended! On this occasion I was not informed which of them had dealt the blow.

It is difficult to fathom the human heart, and so I will not attempt explanation, but will

merely state that yet another letter came saying that these two people could not live without each other, and that I might expect to hear of their marriage any day. Oh, that I could end the story here; but, alas! there is something more to tell. After the lapse of a short time, I received a bulky missive in the handwriting I knew so well. This, I thought, will tell me all about the wedding. It was a bright and newsy letter, and seemed to be the overflowing of a merry, buoyant heart, but contained not the faintest allusion to love or matrimony. I felt completely bewildered, until I reached the explicit and startling postscript: "Me and Miss Parsons has parted for ever."

CHAPTER IX

LAYING ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT

“Curved is the line of beauty;
Straight is the line of duty;
Walk by the last, and thou shalt see
The other ever follow thee.”

AT the close of one of our entertainments, I saw three lads making their way towards me in very evident embarrassment, bent on carrying out some purpose which apparently required all their joint determination to accomplish. They had all that look of awkward self-consciousness that youths wear when dreading the ordeal of making themselves conspicuous; and when they came up to where I stood, making a beginning was obviously a thing of terrifying magnitude, but not to be shirked. The leader was given a push forward by the second, but he hung back with a look of appeal at his supporters. Then the second summoned up courage to say, “Please, he’s got something to give you”; and thus spurred on, the youth took

from his pocket a pack of cards and held them out to me in silence. As I was vouchsafed no explanation and the cards seemed almost new, I took for granted that they were offered as a gift to the Rest, and I thanked him warmly for the thought, but explained that our experience had led us to discourage card-playing, thus following the practice of many warships and military camps. Hereupon the spokesman of the party said, "We did not expect you to use them—only to keep them. We three used to gamble a lot, and all our money went, but since we have been coming to the Rest we have decided to give up cards. We don't want to be tempted again, so we are handing the pack to you."

I told this story the following Sunday night while speaking to the men about the laying aside of every weight. At the close of the evening a young soldier said, "Those boys were wise when they gave you their cards. I know only too well the danger of gambling. I want you to write out a pledge against card-playing for me to sign." I took out my pen to comply with this request, and as we sat writing at the table he talked freely to me. "To-night I've come to see what a weight cards can be. I was the secretary of a Sunday school at one time, but I started card-playing, and soon became a gambler. I felt I must give

up either this or the Sunday school, but the love of gambling so possessed me that I turned my back on Christian work. I have been allowing my mother sixpence a day out of my pay, but last week I lost a sovereign over cards, and had to write home for the money. It came all right, but I felt dreadfully ashamed at taking it. The example of those boys has helped me, and to-night I have determined to have done with cards for ever."

When one becomes really in earnest, what unlikely things are discovered to be *weights*. I have sometimes visited the soldiers in their own quarters to wish them God-speed before they have set out for the front. I found myself one day in the centre of a small group of men. After I had distributed amongst them trifling gifts, one of the number said, "Now I want to make you a present—that is, if you think it worth having." And, unfastening his belt, he began to detach from it a number of regimental badges with which it was decorated. "Take these," he said, offering me a handful. "Stop!" I exclaimed. "Much as I should value them I really must not take them, for I know that they are keepsakes from several of your old comrades." "They shall be yours; I cannot keep them," he replied. "They are all right as ornaments when at home,

but now that I am going abroad to fight, I leave them behind."

"That's right," chimed in one of the other lads. "Suppose a bit of shell struck his belt, what wounds those things would make!" And thus it happened that such a trifle as a mere regimental badge, which only recently had been both of use and an ornament, was now discarded because it had become a "weight."

Before I left the barrack-room I had another object-lesson showing the necessity of laying aside every weight. "Throw those boots away," were the words I heard uttered in firm tones by a sergeant as he looked down upon the young private who was stooping over his kit. As the lad lifted his head, his face wore a look of mingled surprise and dismay, and for a moment he hesitated to obey the command. Before the sergeant could repeat his words, the boots came flying past me, and fell with a loud crash. There they lay on the floor, and how well I understood the feelings of the owner when told to part with them! They were well-made boots, and quite a considerable sum of money must have been spent in purchasing them. "One pair of boots is enough," continued the sergeant not unkindly, "with all the heavy marching you'll have to do. Remember, my lad, that you are now on active service."

A fortnight later letters from some of the men I conversed with that morning spoke of their experiences on arriving in France. They were hurried up to the front, and after detraining had to march over thirty miles with full equipment to reach the firing line. Several of them, through sheer exhaustion, fell out of the ranks, to die by the roadside.

Sometimes the call to "lay aside every weight" comes suddenly. One young friend who took part in the march to which I have just alluded wrote: "The Germans have been shelling us horribly this last two or three days, and drove us from our trenches. They made a surprise attack, and, as they were so near to us, to save our lives we had to leave all our equipment behind, except our rifles. The village of Givenchy was close by, and we sheltered in the houses for a bit. It was hot work, for we did not know at which corner we should meet them, as they were in and out of the houses sniping at us. Presently we charged them, and not a German got back to their own trenches, for those who were not killed or wounded were taken prisoners."

When the writer of this letter returned home wounded some months later he gave me a full account of the fight. "Was it necessary," I asked, "to abandon your kit in the way you

did ? ” His reply was, “ It was our only chance of victory.”

Why do men so universally covet and seek after that burden—gold—which above all others is so prone to crush them beneath its weight !

Look at that young man as he runs along the dusty high-road and, kneeling at the feet of the Master, cries, “ What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life ? ” The reply, “ Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor . . . and come and follow Me,” falls from the lips of Incarnate Love ; but resisting the voice of conscience, ay more, the pleading look of Divine Compassion, the inquirer shrank from obedience to the call.

Between him and the uplands of self-renunciation and high endeavours were the deadly entanglements of “ great possessions.” Hearing the price that victory would cost, for a moment he wavered, then, turning his back on the Captain of the Host of the Lord, he made the great refusal and “ went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”

Is he the only one who has chosen the temporal weight of riches rather than the exceeding and eternal weight of glory ?

“ No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please Him Who hath chosen him to be a Soldier.”



THE GREAT REFUSAL.

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CHAPTER X

MIRAGE

“All is not gold that outward shineth bright.”

IT was the first time that the phenomenon had presented itself to me, and I was deeply impressed. We were making for the North Cape, and our present course sometimes lay close to the rock-bound coast of Norway, with its towering cliffs rising straight up out of “the dim, dark sea.” Often there came into view hills sloping down to the water; here and there they were dotted with cottages, whose inmates with unsparing industry wrung from the shallow soil a humble but not unenviable livelihood.

It was the eve of St. John, a day of festival, and from one end of the land to the other there was rejoicing to welcome the full advent of summer. To herald this coming of sunshine and harvest, at frequent intervals bonfires had been lighted, whose pale columns of smoke—

symbol of ascending praise from thankful hearts—rose up into the heavens.

It was during the afternoon that my attention was suddenly turned seawards by overhearing the words, "What a wonderful mirage!" And the facts did not belie the description. At no very great distance there appeared to rise out of the sea a huge mass of rocks, and we seemed to be steaming right on to them. On drawing nearer, this airy fabric of towering cliffs melted and vanished. Then an island rose out of the water, only in its turn to be dissipated like fog before the morning sun. All at once I noticed in the clouds, suspended high above the horizon, two ships, which after a time slowly faded from view. Some of our crew who were familiar with the Arctic regions told me that the mirage which we witnessed that afternoon was of exceptional vividness. For a couple of hours Nature seemed striving with a witching phantasmagoria to prove that

"This world is all a fleeting show,
For man's illusion given."

A young soldier was sitting idly near a window in the Rest neither reading nor heeding the passers-by, but with his hands clasped and head bowed. He looked so dejected and forlorn that at first I failed to recognise him. On drawing nearer I saw who it was, and sitting down beside him, asked what had happened. There was no reply to my question, only his head sank lower upon his breast, and, unable any longer to control himself, he covered his face with his hands, and his frame was shaken with sobs. Presently he became more composed and said, "I came to see you, and yet I dreaded the meeting."

"Why?" I asked.

"Well," he said, "I have made a smash of everything. I meant it all when I told you that I would be a better chap, and indeed I did try."

I looked at the still handsome face which bore such evident traces of dissipation and saw, instead of the well-groomed, athletic young soldier to whom I had recently bade a brief farewell, an abject figure with uniform all awry, face unwashed, and hair unkempt. He saw me surveying him, and added, "I have no hat; I lost it this morning

on the journey down from London to Cardiff." What a change one short week had wrought! After returning from the front wounded, for a couple of months the lad had spent much of his leisure at the Rest, and almost at the commencement of his visits he had expressed a desire to sign the temperance pledge. Although somewhat reserved in manner, he soon made friends with our workers, with whom he was popular. "I was too ashamed," he continued, "to tell you how I was brought up. Both my father and my mother get drunk. Ever since I've been earning, all that they have done is to take my wages to spend in the public-house. When I went to the front, although I knew this, I let them draw my pay. Some weeks ago, when you suggested my going to see my parents, I felt I couldn't explain it all to you. At last I decided to go, for I hoped things at home might be better since they knew how badly I had been wounded, but as soon as I arrived they got money out of me, and sent for some whisky. I refused to touch it the first couple of days, but they kept on at me till it ended in my giving in. For the last five days I've been drunk day and night, and now all my money has gone. Father came to Paddington to see me off early this morning. He was very drunk, and the last thing he did was to give me a bottle of

whisky." He paused, and then turning to me with an anxious look, exclaimed, " You know that soon I am going out to fight once more. If I'm spared to come back, will it be my duty to go home again to my father and mother ? "

In this dreary London dwelling, which was all this boy knew of home, before the drink-filmed eyes of its inmates there had arisen fair visions of the delights of intemperance, in the vain pursuit of which they had sunk deeper and deeper into the abyss of misery and degradation.

Sometimes it is a vision of actual objects many miles away which the mirage presents, but the power to visualise a far-distant scene is not peculiar to this phenomenon of Nature. A young soldier of blameless life and high purpose, when at the front in the midst of severe fighting, received a letter from his mother. That small missive conjured up the tragedy being enacted in his far-distant home, and for a time the picture he beheld shut out all else. " I've had a letter from mother," he wrote, " telling me father has broken

out drinking again and has deserted her and the children. He has been off before for years, and now they have to break up the home and go into the Workhouse, and the baby is only a month old. I can never tell you what your kind letter meant to me, for I had lost all heart till it came, and I felt I didn't care if I was killed."

One evening, when I was about to leave the Rest, a soldier said to me, "Will you have a talk with this man? He seems in great trouble, and has asked for you." I looked in the direction indicated, and saw a fine stalwart man in the uniform of a Scotch regiment, having tea at a small table. I sat down opposite to him, and he at once began to unburden his heart. "I have come from Scotland to see my brother Andrew, who is very ill, and in hospital here." And little by little he told me his story. I learnt that his name was Robert, and that his brother had returned from France wounded. Their old widowed mother was too feeble to travel from her home in the Lowlands to her boy in the hour of his need,

so he had come instead. He went on to relate in a broad accent, which I shall not attempt to transcribe, how his brother must undergo an operation to remove the piece of shrapnel which was embedded in his brain, as the only chance of saving his life. "I've seen him twice. Will you come with me when I go to-morrow? And I want you to pray with him, for the operation must take place the next day." Presently we parted, and I did not see him again till late that night, when he reeled into the Rest under the influence of drink.

The next afternoon we went to the hospital together as arranged, and again he was drunk. Even on the journey, despite my protestations, he drank a small bottle of spirits which he produced from his pocket. On arriving at the hospital we were conducted to the ward in which the sick man lay. As soon as we got to the bedside, he took off his coat and placed it over his brother's shoulders, with tipsy solicitude. There were four ladies seated at a table in the centre of the ward darning the men's socks, a nurse was also present, and a number of the beds were occupied by patients. Heedless of his surroundings, the drunken man in a loud voice said, "Andrew, don't you let the doctors here experiment on you with their fine operations."

I'll take care of you, and soon you'll be quite well." This he repeated a score of times to his brother, who was very weak and whose mind at times wandered. "No, Bob, no, they shall not operate," he replied, with a timid look at his brother's face. After several efforts I managed to secure silence, and for a brief minute knelt beside the sufferer in prayer. Then the jargon was once more repeated. "They shall not lay a hand on you, Andrew. I'll stop their little game." And the poor dazed sufferer again said, "No, Bob, I'll tell them they mustn't do it." Further argument was useless, and saying that I would come back in a few minutes I went to an adjacent ward to see a patient whom I knew. On my return, Robert had disappeared, and I learnt from those present that he had gone "to have it out" with the doctors, and dare them to try any of their games next morning on *his* brother.

The hospital has accommodation for 1500 patients, and after hurrying along interminable corridors, I at last found him having an altercation with one of the officials of the institution, to whom he was very abusive. Ultimately I succeeded in dragging him out of the building. Two days later when we met he was sober enough to listen to what had occurred, and was

overcome with shame and bitter remorse. On realising the full gravity of what he had done, he hurried to the hospital to arrange that the operation which he was responsible for postponing should be proceeded with. When he returned I hoped to hear that all was well, but one look at him filled me with a nameless dread. He was trembling from head to foot, and his face was ashen white. "It's too late," he cried; "they canna operate—Andrew is dead!"

"Read this," said my visitor, almost as soon as I had entered the room, and she handed me a legal document. I knew her very slightly, and her visit was unexpected. She stood before me tall and erect, and though manifestly ill at ease, she made an effort to steady her voice. Asking her to be seated, I examined the paper as requested. To my surprise I found that it was a summons for her to appear before the court, as her husband was seeking to obtain a judicial separation from her. For years I had known the man to whom she was married. He was a sergeant

in one of our crack cavalry regiments, and it was perhaps the glamour of good looks and an easy assurance of manner which had enabled him to win as a bride a woman who was much his superior in birth and education. I had been impressed with her bearing and refinement on the few occasions on which I had met her.

"Did you know," she asked, "that I had taken to drink?" I made no reply. "Please help me!" she exclaimed imploringly; "if he sends me away it will kill me." And then her voice dropped to a whisper, and tears filled her eyes, as she added, "I love him! If only he will forgive me I will never touch it again." Her repentance was so unmistakably sincere that I had no hesitation in pleading her cause with her husband, who at last yielded to persuasion, and a reconciliation took place. Some months later, when spending an hour with them in their pretty little home, they told me their story. Although she moved in a higher social circle they chanced to meet, and from the first her heart had gone out to him. Battling through strong opposition from her friends, she had given up much to marry the man of her choice. "I did not know the taste of intoxicating drink," she said, "and as to entering a public-house, such a thought never crossed my mind. We had been married for nearly a year,

when one evening while in town together Alfred said that he wanted a glass of beer, and asked me to go into a public-house with him. I demurred at the suggestion, but he would not leave me outside. He could always talk me into anything," she said with a little forced laugh, "and I yielded. I meant to have some lemonade, but everyone round me was drinking beer, and when Alfred handed me a glass I was too shy and embarrassed to ask him to change it." "Yes, I stood her her first drink," he exclaimed flippantly, and his words grated upon me. "Within a year," she said, and a crimson shame spread over her face, "I who had received the education of a lady was known as a drunkard." She could have added that she had rapidly become the terror of the district. "Let us forget the sadness of the past," I exclaimed, "and strive to make the future bright and beautiful." I watched her career with the deepest interest. For some time she triumphed over her failing, and was the means of reclaiming other victims of intemperance. She spoke from her heart, and told of her own bitter experience. "Oh, sisters," I once heard her say with moving eloquence to a large audience of women, "never be deluded into thinking that drink will drown your troubles ; they float on the top, as I have found to my sorrow !"

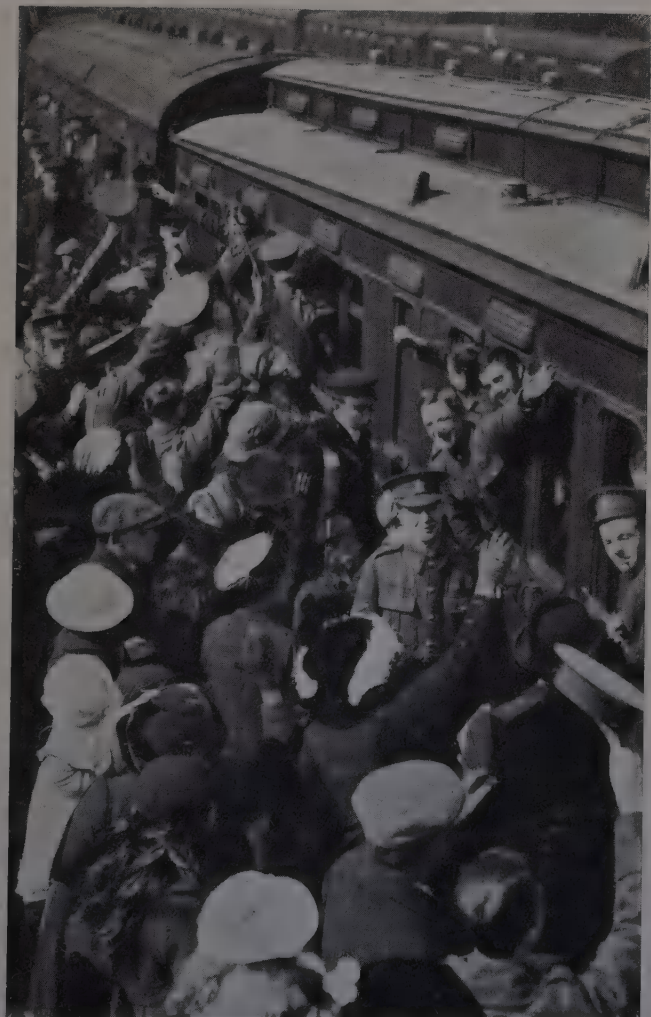
Friends rallied round her, and for two years she fought bravely ; but her husband, who should have been her chief protector, failed her utterly, and despite her own entreaties and the grave warnings of others, insisted on having drink in his home, as, to use his own words, he “ liked a glass with his meals.” Sometimes when she knelt seeking deliverance from the temptation of drink, he would say with contempt, “ Don’t make a fool of yourself ; get up off your knees, and be like me—have a will of your own.”

Who can wonder that she failed again, or who condemn her ! I will pass over the pathos and tragedy of the short, swift years which closed her life, and remember her as she was when spending herself in the service of others. She has gone forth to meet Him who “ delighteth in mercy.”

“ . . . the love of God is broader
 Than the measures of man’s mind ;
 And the heart of the Eternal
 Is most wonderfully kind.”

How often, as our frail barque is sailing on life’s sea, we turn from the right course when the

mirage appears, and allow its illusions to cheat us into the belief that they are enduring and to be sought for! But surely the most subtle and satanic of all agents to call up alluring phantasies wherewith to destroy the children of men is Alcohol! Had we the eyes and heart to see, we should behold a nation sorely afflicted and in bondage, and our spirits, like that of the patriarch of old, would be possessed with "an horror of great darkness."



"GOD BE WITH YOU TILL WE MEET AGAIN."

To face page 116.

CHAPTER XI

"TILL WE MEET"

"Not once or twice in our rough island story,
The path of duty is the way to glory."

IT was scarcely three months after the outbreak of war when a message from Headquarters was received by the local authorities stating that a draft of 500 soldiers must hold itself in readiness to proceed at an hour's notice to the front, where men were urgently needed. In consequence of this all leave was stopped, and even to go outside their quarters special permission was necessary. Four days elapsed, however, before their departure took place, and this uncertainty was a period of terrible stress and strain to all concerned. The first day they were under orders I was handed nearly fifty letters and post cards and fifteen telegrams, mostly urgent appeals to relatives and friends to come for a parting interview, or containing words of tender farewell. It was found impracticable to admit outsiders to the barracks except at stated

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intervals, in a room set apart for the purpose, where the men were allowed to meet their friends for a brief interview, and the farewells were often pathetic in the extreme.

During one of these days a large crowd had stood outside the gates in the drenching rain waiting for the privilege of marching with the men to the railway station. I found that the young wife of a corporal had travelled over thirty miles to see her husband, and afterwards waited for nine hours in the street for the expected appearance of the troops. Right up to midnight, despite the advice of some of the officers, hundreds of people had hung about those closed portals fearing that their vigil would prove in vain should they venture to snatch a few hours' sleep. Feeling convinced that the troops would not entrain before six in the morning, on my own responsibility I went out to that sorrow-laden throng and told them this, explaining that although I too had friends within I was going home to rest for a few hours. Slowly the crowd melted—all save a small group of about half a dozen people, who still remained immovable despite the sharp rain which was now falling. Thinking that perhaps they had not heard, I went to them and repeated my entreaty. There was silence for several moments,

which was broken by one of that little company—a woman—who was in deep mourning.

"You mean it kindly," she said, in tones almost of compassion, "but you don't understand. My husband was in the army and he has just been killed, and my only son is shut up in there," and she turned her gaze to the closed doors. "I must see him and walk by his side as they march to the station. If he came out and I wasn't here I should never forgive myself. Suppose that he too gets killed like his father! I must wait—if it is only to kiss him good-bye." I turned away, for I had no words for a sorrow like this.

Eventually the draft left just as the light of a Sunday morning was breaking. It was late November, and a dreary drizzle fell as the men marched through the streets. The band played ragtime tunes; a continuous roar of cheering was kept up by the crowds, which even at this early hour surged along by the side of the men. Some made anxious search to find a member of their family or a friend in that khaki-clad procession. One lad endeavoured to proclaim where he was by hoisting his white handkerchief as a pennon on the rifle he carried. The effort was short-lived, for at the bidding of an officer it was quickly lowered. On reaching the railway

station only the soldiers were admitted, and a large force of police tried to keep back the public. Their efforts were vain, for love is inexorable, and at various points the crowd broke through, and pressed across the railway track to the carriage windows for a last farewell. There were many attempts at laughter and continued shouts of forced merriment, and the promises made to "come back for Christmas" deceived no one. The band continued to play bright, rollicking tunes, but sobbing wives clung to their husbands and mothers wept as they kissed their sons "Good-bye." The moment for departure came, the whistle sounded, and some tried to raise a cheer as the band struck up "Auld Lang Syne." The train rounded a curve, and just before it was lost to sight, the white handkerchief, which on the march had been hauled down, was once more uplifted and proudly fluttered in the breeze.

The heavy strain of the recent days and nights was over, and I was glad to sit down on one of the benches. Presently I looked around; no one was in sight, and a feeling of desolation fell on my spirit as I viewed the large station, now empty, and thought upon the tragedy of its recently-crowded platform. To hundreds life would never be the same again

after the piercing sound of that engine whistle. Some had returned to life and its sorrows, whilst others had pressed forward to death and glory.

Two years later I conducted a party of soldiers who had arrived by a late train to the dormitory, where I found a group of men already seated around a fire, taking off their boots preparatory to turning in. They looked up, and one of them sprang to his feet and, holding out his hand, said:

"Why, we haven't met for more than a couple of years. I was in that Sunday morning draft you saw off in November 1914."

I took his hand and added, "Yes, you were quickly plunged into heavy fighting, were you not? A short while ago I was told that out of the five hundred who left that morning there are only about thirty still in the firing line."

"That was true a short time ago," he said, "but I have just returned home wounded, and when I came away there were not even thirty of us left."

One hot June afternoon the Soldiers' Rest was invaded by a party of men presenting the strangest appearance. We needed to be told that they belonged to the navy, for we should never have guessed it. Some wore blue serge trousers and khaki coats, others were entirely

in khaki of a light cotton texture. Pith helmets, woollen caps, and naval hats were worn indiscriminately. They proved to be seamen and stokers from ships which had been torpedoed in the Dardanelles. They had arrived at Cardiff Docks, and were on their way to a naval dépôt. One of them said, "The work our men had to do out there was something awful. When the troops were landed, our ships closed up and pounded the Turkish batteries over their heads, until we thought there wasn't enough cover left to hide rabbits, and the troops advanced by stages. But the Turks had got some guns, which they knew how to handle, behind some splendid defensive works and positions. I cannot speak too highly of the Australian troops. They were magnificent in the face of tremendous difficulties and in spite of very heavy losses. Our ship went down in about six minutes after being torpedoed, and those who got away had to be lively, I can tell you."

There were 150 men altogether, and ever since their terrible experience they had had a rough time. They overwhelmed us with thanks for the hospitality received at the Rest, and on the Sunday evening when they left a few of us accompanied them to the station and distributed some small gifts amongst them, and their gratitude

was quite pathetic ; one of them exclaimed with evident emotion, " Thank God, somebody cares for us."

" In every parting there is an image of death," and this, perhaps, is why a man will oftentimes, when saying good-bye, respond to an appeal and fling open the door of his heart. " What you said to me at the station," wrote one lad after being terribly wounded in France, " touched me deeply, and I then and there gave God my heart. Since that day I've altered a lot, and I always say my prayers of a night, and pray for my comrades in the trenches. I was hit with shrapnel, which pierced my jaw and came out near the throttle, but God spared my life."

During a period of little more than two years I have bidden about fifty thousand service men a personal farewell. How varied have been the scenes witnessed ! In numerous instances quite young girls, having no relatives or friends in the draft, pushed their way into the throng for sheer excitement, and they seized the soldiers and danced with them to the gay ragtime tunes of the band, and right to the last minute indulged in most unseemly frivolity. Constantly these flip-pant, noisy young women collected at the station, and one could not but deplore that the last sight our brave lads had, who were going out probably

to die for their country, was not the loved wife or mother, but thoughtless, feelingless strangers, whose bold and giddy conduct must have lowered womanhood in its entirety in the thoughts of those to whom they bid a boisterous and ribald adieu. Again and again those oft-quoted but incomparable words came to me:

“ Ah, wasteful woman ! She who may
On her sweet self set her own price
Knowing he cannot choose but pay,
How she has cheapened Paradise.”

When in the middle of the night we have given supper to the men setting out for the trenches, I have seen women seize the cups, empty them of the tea or coffee, and hand them back to the soldiers filled with whisky. One woman was so drunk when seeing her son returning with a draft to the front that in her frenzied struggles on the platform she nearly fell on the line. As the train moved out of the station the lad, with an agonised look on his face, saw from his carriage window his mother attempting to fight the two men who had saved her from falling beneath the train.

It were better for some lads whom I have known if they were in the position of one who wrote to me from Flanders :

“ Will you write to me, for my mother is dead and I have no home ? ”

The Marchioness of Bute, amongst her multifarious activities on behalf of service men, has turned one of her homes into a hospital and devoted her time to nursing the patients. When in Cardiff she always visits the Rest, and spends an evening with the men, helping them to forget their cares and charm them with her gracious manner. Once when a large draft was leaving for Mesopotamia the men, who had met her ladyship previously, begged that she would come to the station to say good-bye to them. Although it would not be till midnight, Lady Bute gladly complied with the request and came. She shook hands heartily with every one and wished them God-speed. Just before they left a lad said, “Lady, I would like to give you a souvenir, but I have nothing except a button; will you take it?” and he cut it from his tunic as he spoke. A few moments later the train passed out into the night, while with waving of hands and helmets from every carriage window, Lady Bute was cheered to the echo. We stood for some moments silent, then she exclaimed, “Look what one man gave me!” and, opening her hand, showed me the button. “He said, ‘It is all I’ve got,’” she added, with a little catch in her voice, and one could see that the incident had moved her deeply. Several

months later, when speaking of this night, Lady Bute mentioned the button, and told me she had labelled it and put it among her war trophies.

Late one night a man, when leaving with a draft, thankfully accepted a New Testament, exclaiming, "I shall treasure this. We remember God in the trenches, but 'tis the people at home who, when we return, try to make us forget Him." When face to face with Death men have recalled the early influences of childhood and have been moved to pray. One lad writing from the Somme said: "The Welsh, Black Watch, Royal Munster Fusiliers, and a few more regiments are here, and we are over our knees in slush and having a rough time. I am as deaf as a brick owing to the big bombardment on Christmas Eve; it was awful. Two or three times I thought my end had come, and on Christmas night I prayed and cried at the same time, and at last God came to me as I had asked, and I sat down and thanked Him from the bottom of my heart."

The following extract is from a letter written by a Company Sergeant-major of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers:

"Once more I send you word from this sand-bagged country. Yesterday in the first line I picked up a Testament which had been left on the fire-step. What old-time memories came flashing

through my mind when, looking inside, I found your name stamped across the fly-leaf! It is very gratifying to see how the small Testaments and Gospels are appreciated by the men, for I very often see them reading them while in the line. The most striking instance of this was the night before we went 'over the top' at Mametz. It was a good sight. In the fading twilight—the last some of them ever saw—the men were in all positions—squatting, lying down, sitting, or standing—reading and finding comfort in God's word. I firmly believe that all the men in my company who fought their last 'good fight' that day passed over to the great beyond and met their Maker, and were greeted with the words, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' Without exception those who left this earth for a far brighter realm were the pick of the company and God-fearing lads."

Instances have come to my knowledge which make it easy for me to believe that God sometimes reveals to men that the time of their passing is at hand. Like the prophet of old ere the "chariot of fire and horses of fire" came which carried him into heaven, these too with serenity of spirit complete all plans and are ready for the advent of the celestial embassy which parts them and us asunder. I will give but one illustra-

tion. A young soldier who had returned wounded, whilst at home acted for a time as an officer's servant. Before he had fully regained his health he felt he had received a call to return to the firing line. His friends urged him to wait a little longer, and the officer whom he had served so faithfully also pleaded with him to be content with home service until he was stronger; but all persuasions were unavailing, and he volunteered for active service again.

He was very popular at the Rest, and the day he left Cardiff with his draft an unusually large number of our workers assembled at the station to bid him adieu. We gathered round his carriage window and tried to appear cheerful, whilst at heart we were apprehensive and sad; but our friend was calm and happy.

When, shortly afterwards, we learned that he had fallen in France whilst storming the enemy's trenches, we recalled our parting words: "How do you feel, lad, now that you are really going?" He smiled as he answered with perfect serenity, "I feel I am travelling to God along a path of glory."

CHAPTER XII

MARCHING ON

"In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born, across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me:
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on!"

"PLEASE don't move or alter any of the furniture in the house," was the appeal made by a boy when writing to his mother from the front. "I love to picture it as I left it." God has planted as a seed in every breast the love of home—"Home that our feet may leave, but not our hearts."

"To think I am really back again!" said a young officer to his wife. He had just arrived on a ten days' leave from the Somme, and he sank down into an arm-chair with a sigh of satisfaction. "It's all just the same," he added in exultation, "and I can't look at it long enough."

One boy, eager to enlist, got into the army by misstating his age when he was only seventeen. Before going out to fight he returned home to say

good-bye to his widowed mother. The day before leaving he scrubbed the house throughout. "It may be the last time I get the chance," was his remark. He refrained from washing the front doorstep, "because," as he put it, "the neighbours might think it looked queer." Shortly after his arrival at the front tidings were received that whilst acting as sentry he had been shot dead by a German sniper. He had always worn "the white flower of a blameless life," but to his mother the most gracious memorial of his devotion was when at the close of the last day at home, he showed her his hands made rough and blistered by his labour of love.

I have never forgotten a story I heard years ago. A little girl lay dying. She had known no childhood, for at a tender age she had been left to mother her motherless little brothers and sisters, and to keep the home together. Realising that her life was ending she grieved, fearing that she had done no work for Jesus. "What shall I say to Him?" she asked her little sister. "Do not say anything," came the simple answer; "just show Him your hands."

To solve our religious problems I think it would be well if we more often turned from the intellectually great to the "little ones," for there are things which our Heavenly Father has hidden

from the "wise and prudent and revealed unto babes."

One lad, aged nineteen, who was going to France for the third time with a draft of the Lancashire Fusiliers said, between smiles and tears, "I've got only one girl and she is—my mother!" The last thoughts before leaving are always of the loved ones at home. We offer writing materials at the station to the men, and sometimes from a single troop train over 300 letters and cards have been handed to me to post. Whilst stamping the post cards I have often caught sight of the farewell messages to dear ones. They are always words of cheer to those left behind.

Here are a few which are typical of all :

"MY DEAR MOTHER,—Just a line to let you know that I have left to-day for the front. Cheer up, mother dear; hope to meet some day."

"MY DEAR LOVE,—Leaving England for a short time. Cheer up, Chick. With love."

"DEAR FATHER,—Going away to-night from Cardiff to France. Hope you will not worry. Will be back soon."

"MY DEAR MOTHER,—Leaving England to-night. Please cheer up. Your loving son."

“DEAREST,—Just a few lines trusting you are quite well. I am A1. I am sorry to tell you that we are leaving for the front to-day, Sunday, but I am quite happy about it. Cheer up, and don't worry; I shall be all right. I will close with all my love to you.”

“MY DEAR MOTHER,—Going to France to-day. Hope that I will come back safe. Cheer up, dear mother, I am not dead yet.”

The man of action is invariably an optimist! This is how a sergeant in the Welsh Regiment describes his experiences at the front: “I am cheery because it does not pay to be miserable. The day I received the newspaper from you I was sent up to the trenches with twenty-five men carrying bombs, ammunition, and grenades. We left at 11 p.m., and got back at 7 o'clock the next morning. It was a grand night, but the noise was deafening. The guns played at rockets and fireworks, and there was a fine display of fancy night-lights. Our guns kept shouting and the rifles spitting. The tanks indulged in a crocodile tango, but one of them got jambed between two trees, and our fellows, rather than abandon it, used it as a dug-out. We want to fight, but there are times when we get tired of it

all, and, like a child with its toys, we long for something new. When the right time comes we shall have gifts from God that we shall not tire of."

A mother, whose son had just been killed in action, wrote asking me to go to see her. A cold, piercing wind was driving the snow in my face as I made my way to her house down a long, narrow street in a rough quarter of our city. As I stood awaiting admission the thought came to me, "This dreary little dwelling was home to my young friend, and in his imagination it had doubtless shone as a place resplendent when he was far away at the Somme. In his last hour how he must have longed to be within its narrow walls that he might die with his loved ones around him!"

On the door being opened I was shown into a little front sitting-room, and a bright fire sent out a cheerful glow. Presently a kind-faced woman with silver hair entered the room, and when her tears had ceased falling she said, "I wrote saying that I would like to see you, because I wanted to thank the people at the Rest, and let them know how much it had done for my boy. Through its influence he gave up his old companions and many other things besides, and when he used to come ashore his every spare hour was spent there. He loved the place and

the workers. I have his photograph for you," and she took it from a box which was lying on the table, and handed it to me. "And these," she added, holding up some neatly tied packets, "are the letters he wrote to me after enlisting," and she handled them with a caressing touch. "He was my only support," she said, "and when he was here, it seemed that it was not a man but an angel about the house. He was terribly wounded, and when the chaplain asked him if he had any message, his only words were, 'Write and tell my mother that I'll meet her beyond the grave.' "

As I turned my eyes from the poor room and its scanty furniture to the face of the sorrowing mother, I realised afresh that a home is not the contrivance of the architect and upholsterer, but a spot consecrated by true love.

The scene I was witnessing helped me the better to understand an incident which had recently occurred at a large hospital. During the progress of a concert given for the patients, one of the artistes inadvisedly commenced to sing, "Home, Sweet Home." I was not present, but I was told that she could not proceed with it, for it awoke memories too bitter-sweet, and the men were simply beside themselves.

How unceasing is the testimony that the heart

which beats beneath the uniform is "true to the kindred points of Heaven and Home."

After a spell of hot fighting out at the Somme a party of stretcher-bearers drew near to a man whom they discovered apparently resting on his hands and knees. He was leaning over a New Testament, and it was open at the fourteenth chapter of John. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." Thinking he had been wounded they sought to raise him, but found that he did not need their aid, for a voice had called him, saying, "Come, for all things are now ready." And his spirit had gone home to God.

A THANKSGIVING

We thank Thee, O Lord, for all those who, in the hour of their extremity, called upon Thy name and were saved.

The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.

Thou Who art the Prince of Life, we thank Thee that for our sakes Thou didst pour forth Thy soul unto death.

Like some high beacon, we behold Thy Cross beneath the open sky, telling us that the way to Thee is free and broad.

Eternal Spirit, speak peace unto us, we pray Thee.

Lead us in the footsteps of Him Who hath conquered Death, until we join our loved ones in the Land of the Living, where our eyes shall behold the King in His beauty.

AMEN.

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The author has charge of the Cardiff Sailors' rests.
"Most of the incidents ... have happened during the great war, but some are recalled from long ago, for I have worked among service men for more than twenty years."--Foreword.

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